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READER



By ADRIANNE BEER, ATTICUS BIKOS, JESSICA CAMPBELL, GRADY CHAMBERS, SALEM COLLO-JULIN, ALLISON EPSTEIN, KELSEY GERBER, JANAYA GREENE, JOE GUSZKOWSKI, HEATHER HOBBS, JUSTIN KAMP, ALEX KINSEL, MEGAN KIRBY, BECCA LAMARRE, MADDIE LINDSEY, VALYA LUPESCU, ALLISON MANLEY, CASSANDRA METHENY, JESSE NICOLAUS, BRUNO PIERONI, SUZANNE SCANLON, MARIE SCHUTT, DAN SHEEHAN, SHANNON NICO SHREIBAK, EMILY SKWISH, FRANK TEMPONE, RAINN VILLALPANDO, MELANIE WALSH, JORDAN WEIR, RACHEL SCHRAUBEN YEATES **4**

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

MY FIRST APPEARANCE in the *Reader*—following a few decades as a devoted reader—was in a fiction issue, and it always struck me as a fantastic way to round out a year of alternative newsweeklies. Of course to do it right we would have had to have planned it several months in advance, but Karen Hawkins—our digital managing editor—and I had both just started by the time it became clear, in early November, that no fiction issue had been scheduled for 2018. (To be fair, there were some real questions about the *Reader's* future in general.)

What to do? We wanted to read fiction, and we know you people love to write it. Was there a way, in far too short of a time span, to get in a whole mess of good writing, read through it all, and select the best entries for publication before the end of the year?

Within 24 hours a call for submissions to an exciting new endeavor—a flash fiction issue!—went out. Entries of 500 words or fewer. It was our only rule! (Besides that submissions be original and previously unpublished, although that's a little more legal butt-covering than a "rule.") Within about 25 hours, a steady stream of extremely short stories started rolling in. We accepted submissions for only a week—so we could select the best of them, copy edit, and get them illustrated before the end of the year—and received over 230 entries total (a full 10 percent of them in the actual final hour).

There was fun stuff in there. Our first read-through gave us a pool of nearly 90 pieces from which we would select a final batch for print publication. Flash fiction is tricky: it's such a short form, writers hold back when they shouldn't, or focus exclusively on narrative. A good balance of story, descriptive detail, and thoughtful consideration of form is difficult in stories of any length. But jamming all that into 500 words or less takes real talent.

Finding that talent takes effort. We had staff read each of those 90-ish pieces and vote, so that each piece was read, and voted on, three times. We then selected a final 30 stories based on those with the most votes for print publication, and another five for digital publication, just to be extra. Then we sent

all that work off to copy editing, illustration, and layout.

The final days of sending a publication to press are traditionally a grind, and trying to get an issue out before the winter holidays is spectacularly stressful. The proofing process is not the funnest part of print publishing: tiny text you've read far too many times and can no longer see mistakes in, digital jags that throw off entire pages in the final hour. Suddenly words stop making sense, or you can't remember why you thought a story was ever a good idea in the first place.

But proofreading this issue was a total joy. A ton of great, very short fiction, written by you, people who live in or love this city from afar. Each story retains its own distinct style and voice—we allowed some formatting inconsistencies between stories to preserve this uniqueness. Most of us were caught while proofing by how moving some of the stories are, or how funny, after the strain of judging them had passed. Chicago itself becomes a frequent character, and the city's impact on its writers is clear. This city nourishes you.

We're delighted to bring the work of these writers to our pages in this double issue. (Remember! No new *Reader* next Thursday!) Luckily you'll have all the concert, theater, and film reviews you need to get by during the week we take off.

Unfortunately, our last issue dropped a few lines from a theater review of *Witch* by Justin Hayford; it is available online in its entirety. An image in *City Life* was also printed sideways, although that was a test to see if you were paying attention. (You were!) And we neglected to mention one of the coproducers of *HeLa*, by Sideshow Theater Company and Greenhouse Productions.

With that, we'll leave you to the flash fiction issue, and the 30 tiny worlds each story contains. You will recognize some of these worlds, find others infuriating, and learn to love more than one of them. Then when you see us again, it will be a new year. And you won't believe what we have in store for you for 2019.

—ANNE ELIZABETH MOORE

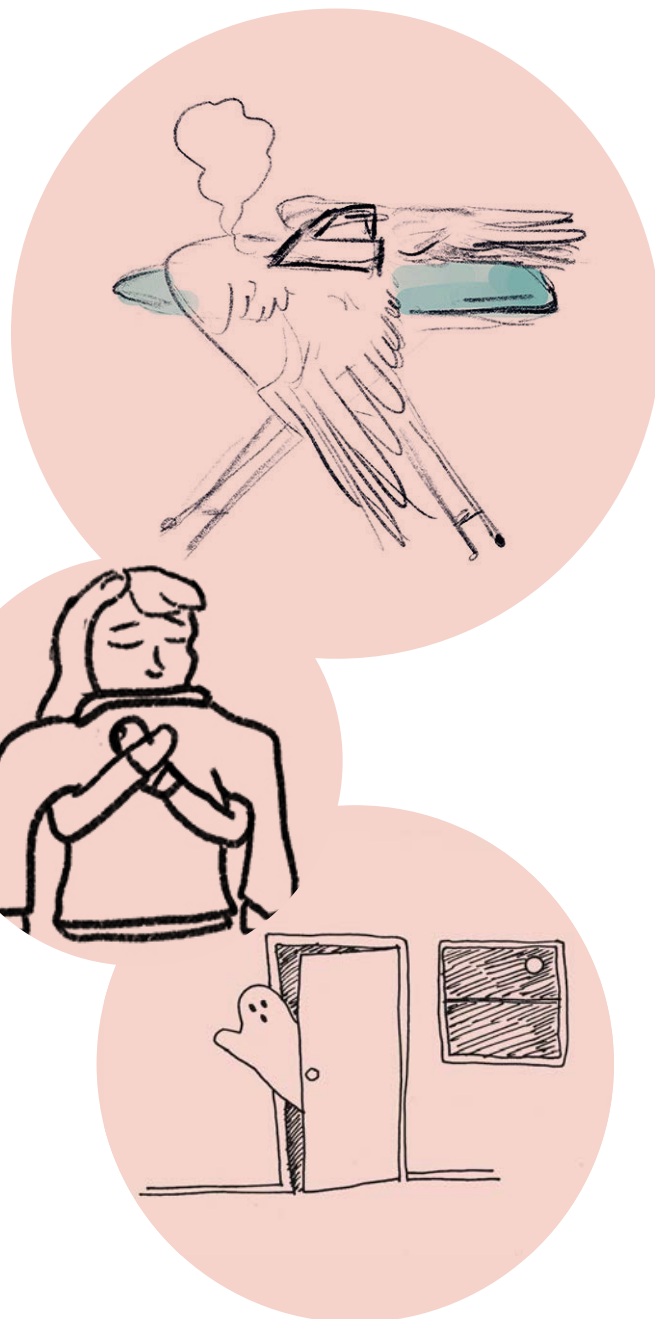
FEATURES

FLASH FICTION

Tell us a really, really short story

Chicago's best extremely short fiction of 2018

BY VARIOUS 4



THIS WEEK

IN THIS ISSUE



ARTS & CULTURE

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ON THE COVER: ILLUSTRATION BY LYDIA FU.
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READER (ISSN 1096-6919) IS PUBLISHED WEEKLY
 BY STM READER, LLC
 2930 S. MICHIGAN, SUITE 102 CHICAGO, IL 60616
 312-392-2934, CHICAGOREADER.COM

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Flash fiction



Extremely short stories of 500 words or less



DANIEL FISHEL

Waiting

By CASSANDRA METHENY

I WAITED IN a small white room, in bright white light, for close to 20 minutes. I fidgeted, crossing and uncrossing my feet, checking my reflection in Snapchat, scrolling through Instagram on my phone without purpose. The smell of antiseptic filled the room; posters for PrEP and HIV testing shared the walls with diagrams of male and female anatomy. I hated coming here, but I knew it was necessary and I was grateful to have somewhere I could go.

So I waited, and eventually a nurse came in to draw my blood. He had cinnamon-colored skin and kind features and wore squarish wire-framed glasses. He looked about 30, and I wondered if we were the same age. We said hello to each other, and he got started.

I forget how many tubes they need to take at once. Six or eight or something like that. I hate needles—but stabbing myself weekly for over a year had made this a little easier.

As he was finishing up and putting a Band-Aid on my arm, I recalled my last injection. It took two shaky tries and ended with me feeling nauseous on the floor in my bathroom. So then I asked him, “Do you know how I might go about switching to smaller needles for my weekly injection? It’s been intramuscular so far, but I find it difficult sometimes and wanted to try sub-q instead.”

“Do you inject estrogen or testosterone?” he asked.

“Estrogen,” I replied quietly.

“Right, that’s thick stuff. I bet it can be tough. How do you go about injecting it?”

“I used to do it in my thigh, but I switched to my glutes because it seemed less painful.”

“Right. Well, your doctor isn’t in today, but

come back by soon and I’m sure they could work that out for you. It might change the absorption rate, but you might find it easier. The needles are much smaller.”

Outside it was spitting rain and the wind had picked up, swirling orange-gold leaves through the cool gray mist, which fluttered and fell to the ground, clumping in soggy brown piles. I stood wrapped inside my scarf, waiting for the bus. Eight minutes, waiting. Always waiting. Waiting to stop being misgendered. Waiting for the hair to stop growing on my face. Waiting for my breasts to come. Waiting for my thighs to grow. Waiting for my reflection to change. Waiting. Waiting to feel pretty. Waiting to be wanted. Waiting to fall in love. Waiting. Waiting to get over heartbreak.

Waiting. Waiting to have a vagina. Waiting. Waiting to not feel like a man anymore. Waiting to feel like a real woman. Waiting.

The bus appeared at the intersection just before the stop where I was standing. Suddenly, feeling incapable of being in close proximity to so many people, I turned right and started off in the direction of home. 



DANIEL FISHEL

Red Ahead

By JANAYA GREENE

“LOOSE SQUARES, LOOSE squares!” rang through the aisle.

“Boy, if you don’t bring yourself back over here,” said a middle-aged woman with long twists flowing from her roots. The wide-eyed little boy tried to run farther down the el car when a teenager in a puffy jacket slightly stuck his Js out in front of the toddler and said “Hey little man” with a smile.

He ran back to his mom and snuggled beside

her. Meanwhile, Felicia sat across from the two, relieved the little one didn’t miss a beat and trip. She sat feet crossed, wishing not another soul would sit by her. She placed her tote bag to her right. Five PM rush was hell enough without someone elbowing her side to numbness.

Nonetheless, people were clearing out. The train was going farther south, and she began to have room to breathe again. It looked more like 10 PM than five.

“CDs, loosies, smell-goods!” yelled another man draped in lime green. He paraded his merchandise left to right for his potential patrons to see. A long rush of wind from his push through the emergency door pressed most people past interest in even seeing what he was selling. Most just looked back at their phones, but a few had to get their fix.

“Ay man! Over here!” one man yelled, then an abrupt stop.

The overhead blared, “Attention passengers, attention passengers, we only have one rail available due to crews working on the tracks. We should be pulling off in a few minutes. We appreciate your patience. Thank you for riding the CTA.” The operator sounded like she was reading from a sheet of paper verbatim.

Obscenities filled the railcar. The teenager sat to Felicia’s left; she struggled to hold in a grumble. She was so annoyed she barely felt the tap on her shoulder.

“Hey, uh, can I have some of that popcorn? I’m so hungry,” he pleaded.

She slipped her bag of O-Ke-Doke popcorn out of her tote and busted it open. The teen’s eyes went wide as she poured the popcorn in his cupped hands. “Why weren’t there more places to get real meals off this damn train?” Felicia thought. She concluded it wouldn’t matter anyway.

The train finally made it to the Dan Ryan. The teenager mumbled “Ay miss thank you again” as he downed the snack and walked to the exit doors.

“No problem. Glad you said something,” she responded.

The train pushed forward and a group of passengers gathered around the exit doors in competition, like they just might miss the stop if they weren’t at the doors before the train took its final halt.

Felicia let the group clear before she rose from her seat. Scrambling through folks wasn’t worth the stress. She still ran into the masses anyway, meeting the brittle breeze. She could barely walk through the platform.

New station, same 95th Street. 



LYDIA FU

Lemon Layer Cake

By SHANNON NICO SHREIBAK

I WONDER IF lemon layer cake is the appropriate flavor for a dead man’s birthday, but who’s really going to tell me otherwise?

Damon and I didn’t know each other long enough to celebrate a birthday together, but I’ve still baked him a triple-layer lemon cake on the last day of September for the past half decade. You’d think that after this long, the measurements would be scrawled across my eyelids or etched somewhere between heart and my hands, but at my age memory is a matter of give-and-take. There’s no telling what part of Damon I’d lose in order to vacate a recipe’s worth of mental real estate.

I squeeze the lemons with a tenderness that I rarely show myself—let alone anyone else—these days, stir the bone-white batter to the rhythm of my final words to Damon: “Cheat, but no mistress.” I recite the words till they ring like a prayer, then till they knock hollow, and then a few more times for good measure.

The wedge of cake I deem presentable sweats beneath a tent of plastic wrap as the 77 bus rips eastward through the guts of our old—still my—neighborhood. Past the bar where we traded clammy handshakes, tall tales, and half-truths, then a couple key bumps. A rolling stop within eyeshot of the record store where we hawked half our combined collection to pay the Peoples bill during the Polar Vortex or Snowpocalypse or whatever the world decided to name that year of three-dog nights. Toward the taqueria where we inhaled tortas ahogadas so fast that the ruddy red sauce ricocheted onto my \$14 Village Discount wedding dress, but it barely mattered because we were legally obligated to clean up each other’s messes. ➔

continued from 5

When I amble up to the last square foot of the world worthy of Damon's memory, I'm not alone. A woman swaddled in a camel trench coat stands just beyond my stake of the shoreline and meets meets my gaze. The guilt that cloaks her face is as plain as the contours of her wind-bitten cheeks, the teary glint in her eyes. I need not ask her name; her face answers every question I was about to ask the waves beneath me.

I peel the wrapping off the cake and present it to the horizon like a child begging for Communion. I toss the slice, porcelain plate and all, into the swell. The waves swallow it whole, barely leaving a wrinkle across the bruise-colored waters.

I wait to hear the name that colored Damon's final breath. I wait for the sea to bring me something, anything in return. 

Hurdles

By EMILY SKWISH

EVERY NIGHT, CASEY would lie in bed touching herself as she devised the next plot twist. She didn't know which she liked better, concocting at night, sometimes for hours at a time, or writing it out the next day, a reward and consolation after PE. Whenever she started to feel weird or bad about it, she'd reach between the bed and the wall and retrieve the stolen copy of *Flowers in the Attic* that was wedged there, a reminder that everybody read books like this. Constantly. Sitting at McDonald's. Wherever.

She had started writing a month ago in study hall, inspired by Amber and Blake, popular kids from one table over. Casey sometimes spent the entire period watching them. Blake would slide Amber a note, and her head would go down into her hands, her shoulders convulsing in silent laughter. Casey wondered what it would feel like to be made to laugh that hard. She picked up her pen and wrote what she imagined their whispered conversations to be. Those dialogues blossomed into what were now 20 blue-inked pages—an erotic fantasia of middle school romance starring most of the A-list and a few B-list popular people by name.

The eighth-grade girls were deep in a PE unit called Hurdles. It involved both actual hurdles and tires to be penetrated with a high-knee quickstep that aggressively favored the

taller ones. Afterward, those who were most dexterous with curling irons emerged from the locker room with hair at full bounce. Casey was great at neither Hurdles nor hair. Study hall was right after, and she would suck on a long strand, still wet from the shower, while she wrote.

The night before, Casey had decided to write herself into the story. She couldn't wait to start: The popular kids dare Casey, the quiet new girl, to demonstrate her best passionate kiss on Tyler Sizemann as a cruel joke. But guess what? Joke's on them.

Behind her, a voice said, "Hey, I like your pornographic book. I bet everybody will." All the sound in the locker room sucked itself down to a pinpoint. Casey froze, hunched forward in her unnecessary bra.

"You think I don't see you staring at me in study hall like some pervert?" it said. When Casey turned to look, her assignment notebook shot into the air, dangling from Amber's hand, a million miles up.

"Who should I show this to first? Mr. Neeley? Blake? My mom?" Amber asked. Casey considered jumping for it, a dog lurching for a treat she'd never get. She considered stabbing Amber in the stomach with a curling iron.



When she finally spoke, the words came into her mouth from somewhere outside her body.

"It's not finished," said Casey. "Don't you want to know what happens?"

Casey sat down in study hall and tore out the 20 pages she had written. She handed them to Amber and Blake, who sat beside her, reading. Casey found a blank page, pulled her hair back, and started to write. 

Unattended Packages

By MELANIE WALSH

I WAS HUNKERED down at Gate C21 next to a very pathetic-looking Christmas tree—patchy, weak light job, zippo presents. The agent behind the desk was singing—off-key and to the tune of "Good King Wenceslas"—that our flight had been delayed another 30 minutes. These days, airline companies know that every customer interaction teeters on a razor-thin edge between viral-marketing sensation and disaster. Thus, flight attendants increasingly serve ginger ale and peanuts while beatboxing

or relay the essential features of seatbelt safety with winking double entendre and ironic sexy lunging.

Every few minutes, a loud computerized chime tolled over the PA system, and a nonhuman voice reminded us to report all foreign, unattended packages to our nearest airline representative immediately. Sometimes another voice, charmingly human, would cut in to announce an item that had been left behind at security: headphones, a belt, something either so precious or so salacious they claimed they could not name it over the loudspeaker.

I asked a young mother sitting across from me if she would watch my bags while I got up to get a Diet Mountain Dew. When I returned, the woman was coaxing her son into spitting out a recently consumed left AirPods.

Though I found my own luggage unmoved, I noticed a box beneath the bony-ass Christmas tree beside me that hadn't been there before, a box wrapped in shiny yellow paper with a red bow.

I waved, trying to catch the young mother's attention, and asked, with profuse midwestern apology, if she had happened to see the package sitting there before.

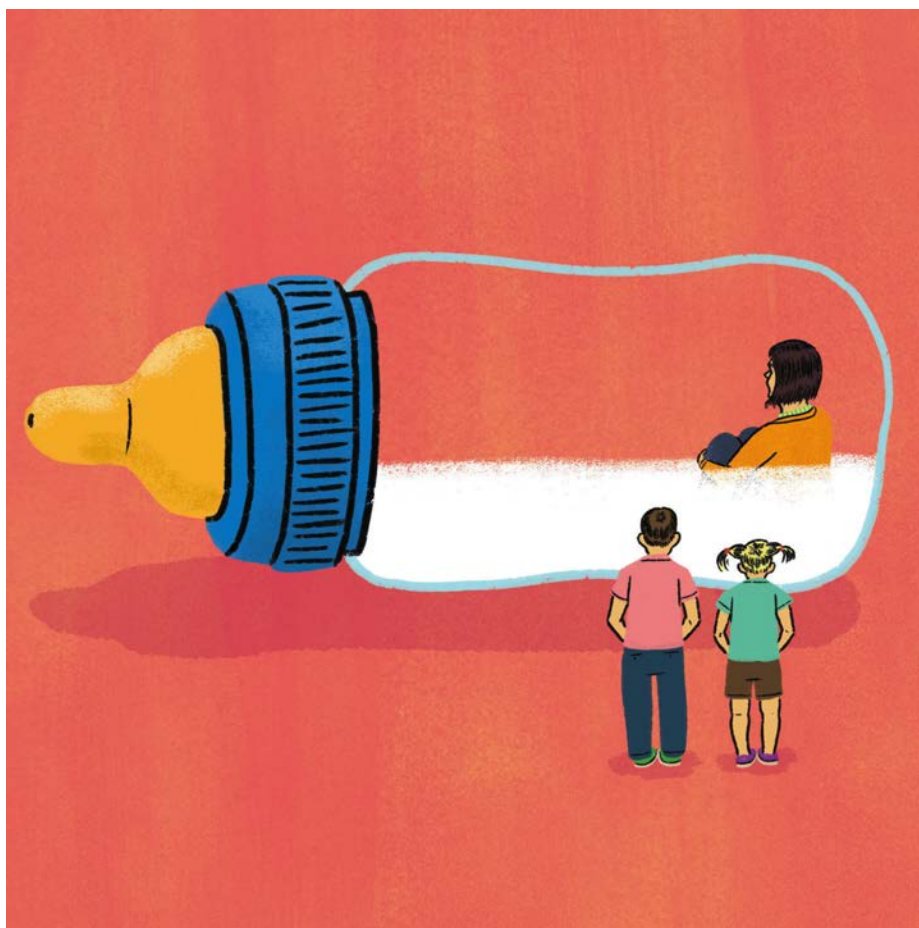
"What package?" She narrowed her eyes and pulled her son closer.

I gestured to the package under the tree, apologized again, and emphasized that I didn't mean to cause alarm.

"Alarm?" an older woman cawed, spinning around. She stood up and pointed her large index finger like an Irish setter. "Are you suggesting that's a foreign, unattended package?"

Many gasped. The phrase "foreign, unattended package" began to circulate through-





out the C terminal. All eyes turned toward the loathsome tree and me, standing beside it. Four TSA agents and a German shepherd pushed through the crowd and flanked us.

“What’s going on here?” the lead TSA agent barked.

“Foreign, unattended package,” I muttered.

The TSA agent reached down, picked up the package, and, to my horror, began to open the lid. There was a bright flash as an explosion of green and red confetti sprayed into my face.

Twenty minutes later, the official TSA Instagram account posted a split-screen photo to its 958K followers. One photo showed the package bursting its Santa-shaped confetti into my abject face. Another showed me arm in arm with the four TSA agents and the drug dog, all of us clad in festive red hats.

“It’s not cool to leave a package unattended, even if you’re Santa,” the caption read. “Congrats to the winner of this month’s Aviation Security Samaritan award and happy holidays from the TSA!”

Instinctively I smashed the *like* button—3,097 and counting. 📌

Hits

By ATTICUS BIKOS

HOW TO BE happy when you hate your kids how to—

ways to occupy your kids
post partum depression years later
how long can post partum last
natural remedies for post partum
chicken taco recipe
best kids books 2018
podcasts for kids
cheap ways to move with kids
how to tell your kids about moving
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when do you know if your kid is smart
is 2 or 3 kids better
best yoga gave birth
bike trailer kids
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introducing boyfriend kids

night time meditation video
therapy Chicago parents divorce
best child therapists Chicago
best therapists single moms
celebrity single moms
Angelina Jolie
Angelina Jolie current
Angelina Jolie current kids
Brad Pitt kids
Brad Pitt new girlfriend
Rihanna weight gain
best women friendly porn 📌

Untitled

By MADDIE LINDSEY

MAKE SOMETHING UP on your resume, Olivia said. *It’ll be fine, she said. And then you’ll have a job.*

Well, Tammy had a job, all right. It paid \$12 an hour and even gave her an employee discount.

The discount would be handy if only she knew what any of this shit did. “That’s the last time I’m listening to Olivia,” Tammy muttered, forcing a tepid smile as the doorbell chimed.

“Welcome to Ozzy’s Emporium—oh.” No customer, but the proprietor himself.

“Tamarind! Good to see your smiling face.”

“Ozzy,” said Tammy. Ozzy had invented a score of nicknames for Tammy in the short time they’d known each other. Tammy did not appreciate being compared to a legume, but it was leagues better than Thomasina.

“How’s business? Has the cash register begun to overflow?” Tammy would not put it past Ozzy to have a cash register that overflowed, but whatever it overflowed with would surely not be money.

“Only two customers. Tourists, from Ohio, I think.”

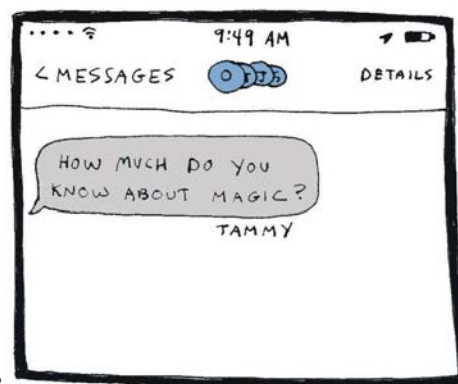
“Surprising. We’re still in the shoulder season.”

“Maybe they can’t handle the heat?”

“You could have sold them on this,” Ozzy said magnanimously, producing a small crystal goblet from a cluttered shelf. “Instantly freezes whatever you drop in. Great at parties. But watch your fingers.”

Tammy hummed as the facets caught the light. Ozzy gently replaced the glass and sauntered over, cap balanced on one finger.

“Tamar,” he said, eyes unfocused as the hat spun and spun. “I know it’s your first day. But I will be out this morning with buyers, and out



this afternoon picking up a shipment. Can you handle the shop alone?”

Now would be the time to raise an objection, to ask Ozzy if he could explain what Tammy was supposed to be trying to sell. All she knew was some things were magical, some things were dangerous, and she hadn’t the faintest idea which was which. But she smiled and gave in to the illusion that everything was under control.

“Good.” Ozzy winked. “I’d expect nothing less from my star employee.”

“I’ve worked here less than an hour.”

“I know it when I see it.” He swiftly unlocked his office door with an old brass key. “Oh, Bayon might be by later.”

“Bayon?”

“He covers weekends.” A crisp straw boater now flattened Ozzy’s hair. “House rules: always answer the phone, lock up if you need to leave, and—”

“Don’t go in the basement.”

“That’s the ticket.”

“And if I need to get ahold of you . . . ?”

“I trust that you can handle any situation that arises, Tasmin.”

Tammy figured this was code for “I’ve never had a cell phone except maybe a brick from the 80s and I will continue to resist the march of technology.”

“I’ll keep that in mind.”

“Ta!” Ozzy tipped his boater and ducked out the door.

Tammy slumped to the counter as he rounded the corner, firing off a message to the group chat.

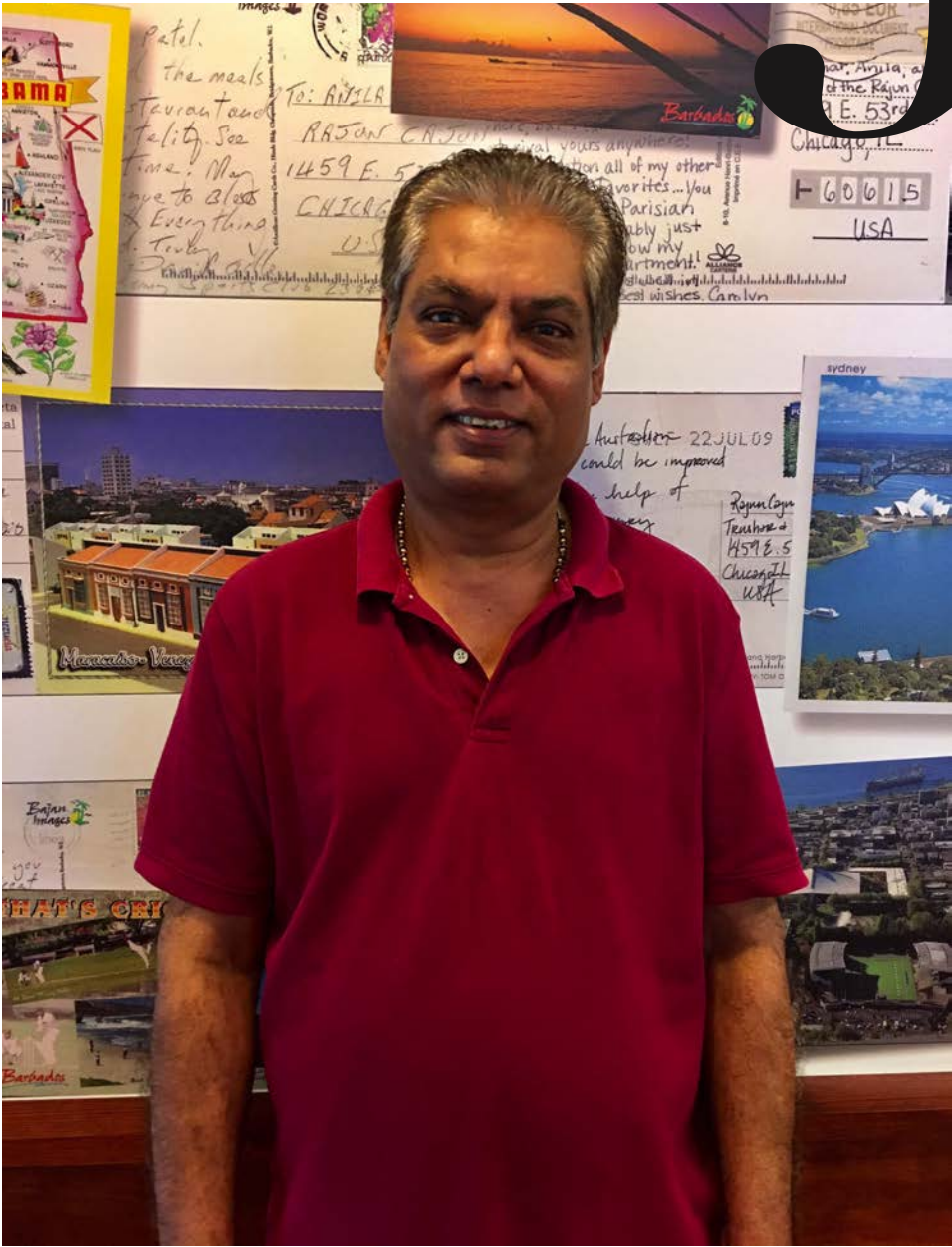
TAMMY [9:49:09 AM]: How much do you know about magic? 📌

continued on 10

faces of

53rd street

A MONTHLY SERIES
FEATURING HYDE PARK
NOTABLES



THIS MONTH
Trushar Patel

**Rajun
CAJUN**
INDIAN & SOUL FOOD SINCE 1993

SEE THE COMPLETE FACES OF 53RD VIDEO SERIES AT CHICAGOREADER.COM/53RDFACES

A twenty five year anniversary is a considerable achievement, especially when it comes to Hollywood marriages or restaurants, and owner Trushar Patel has real reason to be proud of his Hyde Park Indian and Southern comfort food cafeteria-style local gem, Rajun Cajun, officially in business since 1993. And you can join in the celebration during the entire month of December with a special 25% savings when you dine at the restaurant (takeout and delivery orders not included).

If you've never been to Rajun Cajun before, a few things will be evident when you visit the restaurant for the first time, including a) it smells delicious, b) it's immaculate, c) if it's not owner Trushar Patel taking your order, it will be his wife, Anila, or his son, Nishil. The family works together at the restaurant, and as Trushar says, his wife and son are the most influential people in his life.

Born and raised in Kenya, Trushar came to the United States in 1979 when he was in his early 20s. He started working as a crew member at McDonald's, advancing his way up to supervisor – a position he held for 16 years. He was on track to have his own franchise location when Nishil was born several months premature. The medical bills for his son's care upended those plans, and ultimately led Trushar and his brother Rohit to partner in buying a shuttered chicken restaurant location in Hyde Park now known as Rajun Cajun.

There aren't many Indian food restaurants 10+ miles south of Devon Avenue, let alone combined with Southern comfort food classics, and when the restaurant first opened, Trushar had to rely on word of mouth, sampling, and recommendations from his first customers to bring in more business. Rajun Cajun built a loyal following with international students at the University of Chicago missing

their favorite Indian specialties, which kickstarted a tradition that continues today – customers sending postcards addressed to the restaurant from their vacations and visits home. When Rajun Cajun was renovated several years ago, a collection of the postcards was incorporated into a mural on the restaurant's main wall.



It's not uncommon for the visiting parents of international students to ask Trushar and his wife to keep an eye out for their sons or daughters, and there are now second-generation customers visiting Rajun Cajun as well. His first employees are still with the restaurant; a true record for the industry. Trushar says, "We treat our customers like family, and that's an extension of the way we treat our employees, too. It's not the typical employer/employee relationship – there's a lot of trust involved." And once you fall in love with Rajun Cajun's samosas, you can rest easy

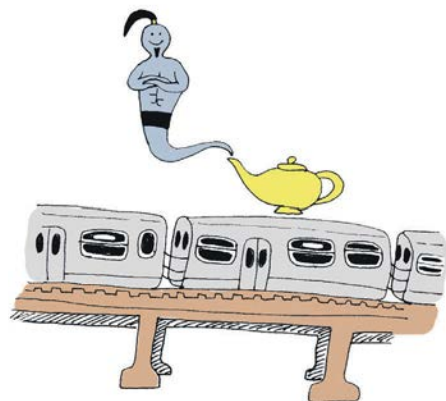
knowing they have been made by the same woman since the restaurant opened its doors, and won't be changing anytime soon.

Running the restaurant is a more than full-time endeavor for Trushar's family – all the food is made in-house and each day begins with lots of peeling and chopping of fresh ingredients – nothing is ready-made or from a can. Traditional Indian recipes are very labor-intensive, and Trushar makes almost everything himself, just as he learned growing up. The Rajun Cajun menu has something for everyone, with many vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free options. It's become a local family favorite, since kids not adventurous enough for chicken curry are usually open to fried chicken or mac and cheese.

In honor of the restaurant's anniversary and with an eye to the future, Trushar recently worked with a local design company to refresh Rajun Cajun's logo, website, menus, and social media presence. It's now possible to order directly from the restaurant online, with delivery by Rajun Cajun employees, making sure your saag paneer or butter chicken is just how you want it.

1459 E. 53rd Street
(773) 955-1145
rajuncajunhp.com

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tion my girlfriend and not just a model I saw at the Wit Hotel off of State/Lake, and besides in our penthouse with a view of the river around the corner from Clark/Lake we don't even have to worry about noise complaints, because the couple downstairs are my best friends Michelle and Barack and they're usually out of town working on her presidential campaign, and whose victory we are going to celebrate at Pizano's where each slice has zero calories and is what I'd eat every day instead of Gold Coast Dogs, which is not even in the Gold Coast but it doesn't matter, because we'd have stopped arguing about hot dog-related things, like what

the hell ketchup should and should not go on, thanks to being too busy riding the Holiday Train all year long."

The genie's eyes had narrowed down to slits. "There," I said. "Notice I only said 'I wish' once."

He shut his eyes and pinched the bridge of his nose.

After he snapped his fingers, I found myself walking down the steps of the Washington/Wells stop on my way to the Civic Opera, where I was about to perform my first aria. Natasha and the genie met me backstage.

"OK," he said. "Two more." ■

In Which I Am a Willing Accessory to Marine Pollution

By RACHEL SCHRAUBEN YEATES

DANNY'S GRANDMOTHER PULLS off at another scenic viewpoint. The sky threatens snow. She gets out, shakes her head—an Antoinette-esque pink tower of hair, and jerks the pickup back into drive.

Loophole

By BRUNO PIERONI

"**I WISH** I could get on the Brown Line at Quincy and not have the train smell like pee, but wait: it wouldn't smell like pee, and I could get a seat; then when we got to LaSalle/Van Buren no one—who are we kidding: a dude, it's always a dude—would sit next to me and manspread me into a half-seat-sized person, so that when we stopped at Harold Washington Library-State/Van Buren I could focus on how I don't have a stack of overdue books that I keep forgetting to return and instead are racking up fines on my nightstand so as we came close to Washington/Wabash, when a group of tourists asked me if this was the stop for 'the art museum,' I wouldn't even feel like correcting them with a 'you mean the Art Institute?' full of attitude; instead, I would be exceedingly helpful, so much so that they would offer me their unused tickets to *Hamilton*, which I would politely refuse, because I would have already seen it at least once because Lin-Manuel Miranda asked me to audition after noticing me singing karaoke at Brando's Speakeasy, totally sober, and I was—no, *had always been*—a great singer my entire life, and never would my neighbors have sent me a politely worded e-mail asking that I watch the volume of 'my shower-time activities,' which meant my singing even though it sounds like a term for shower sex but it's not, not at all, not because I've been single for six months thanks to my wife vanishing one day like the Randolph/Wabash stop but because I live with a very attractive Ukrainian who is without ques-



Buckled into the front seat is Danny's grandfather, cremated and in a milky-white urn.

We're taking him to this place he used to go cliff diving. How he and Annie met, apparently. I'm picturing a 20-something Annie—head a towering stack of pink braids, dressed in a frilly one-piece, toes pointed like a ballerina—winking at another 20-something with his hair greased back.

The plan is to scatter him over the edge. This is all probably illegal.

"Thanks for coming along," Danny says. "Pops would've been 89 next month, but everyone's gotta go sometime."

After too many speed bumps, Annie gets out and checks again.

She jumps back in, shaking her head.

"Next one."

"You know, they raised me, Nana and Pops. Never known anyone who worked so well together. I wanted someone like that for me, you know?"

I nod.

"You in a relationship?" he asks.

"Just out of one."

"Oh, that's rough. Had you guys been together long?"

"Five years."

"Wow." He looks out over the highway to the ocean. "Wow." As though five years is longer than the decades his grandparents had.

After several "next ones," Annie stops again. She stands outside for a few minutes, then shuffles back to the truck.

"This one."

We're right on the edge. I am very impressed with the young Miss Annie Lin. That is a drop.

She won't let Danny take the urn.

"You weren't married to him. You didn't wash his underwear."

I haven't unbuckled yet.

"I think I'll let you have your family moment."

"Nonsense, you get out right now." With one arm, Annie reaches in and pulls me out of the truck.

We're at the sill now. Wind's blowing back at us. When Annie lifts the lid, some of her husband flies into her face.

"Ope, hello again."

Danny's sputtering and laughing and crying a little.

"Nana, let me hold it. You can scatter."

The waves below crash against the bluff. She shakes her head.

"I need to do this," she says, then turns to me. "Would you hold my shoulder?"

I nod.

She lifts up on her tiptoes, reaches fragile

arms out over the railing.

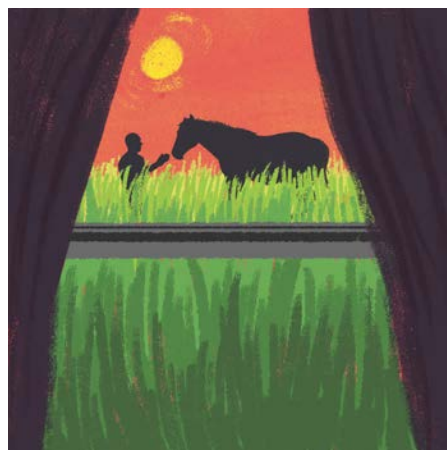
And drops the whole thing out and over.

"Nana—" Danny says, craning over the rail to see the urn disappear in the surf.

"Welp, that's done." Annie brushes her hands off on her pants and pulls Danny's arm over her shoulders.

Mist from the sea freezes on our faces and in Annie's tower of hair. After a moment, Danny pulls her in and rocks on the balls of his feet. Their eyes close.

I feel Annie squeeze my hand and think I see a gray mist spin itself into the waves below. **■**



DANIEL FISHEL

The Horses

By FRANK TEMPONE

I STOPPED SO she could photograph the house built peculiarly close to the edge of the road that connects Danville to North Danville, Vermont. We'd driven past this house a thousand times in the nine years we'd been together. Every time I'd have more questions.

There's a barn in the foreground that sheltered some horses. The snow had buckled the roof, and when I asked about the horses, my wife said that the worst part of it was the hoof rot, that the horses were left to walk in a tight, penned-in area, the surface so muddy their hooves would cake in the muck. The neighbors, which meant anyone in a 20-mile radius, worried about the horses, reported it several times to the appropriate authorities, whoever they were.

Usually, I'd complain too, and have a little disdain for people like these, but my wife told me the man who owned the house, a husband and father of three adult children, had terminal cancer. It's easy for me to make assump-

tions about people I don't know, or people I haven't seen in a while:

He has not e-mailed back for a week; he must hate me.

No one has praised my work all year; I'm going to be fired.

That house is a dump, a blue tarp covers a yawning hole on its side, and a school bus is parked out back; I must be better than they are.

You'd think I'd know better, growing up the way I did, with the food stamps and the pea soup and the blocks of government cheese. I'd ride with my father in the rust-eaten mail truck past nice houses on Long Island to set up our booth at the flea market, and he'd tell me that it's not about the houses but about who's inside, goddamnit.

My wife scampered up the hill across the road from the house to snap these photos years ago. There was a moment during her reconnaissance mission when I thought he might be standing at the window, stricken with cancer, resigned that she was another neighbor gathering evidence against him.

I heard his three grown kids are doing well, holding down jobs, making regular money.

I imagine him on his deathbed, set up next to that window so he can see his horses.

That brown one is looking right at my wife as she takes the picture, and if you look at the other photo, the horse has turned the other way to look right at her. He knows.

The horses aren't there today. The weeds are overgrown where their hooves used to sink in the muck. I imagine the family got rid of the horses like people get rid of boxes of clothes of those who went and died on them.

But maybe they kept the horses for a while to spite the neighbors. Perhaps with all the complaining, some of the proper authorities paid them a visit, inspected the horses, and found that they were happy. **■**

The Pool Hook

By ALLISON EPSTEIN

THE SUMMER BEFORE sixth grade, I used to play dead in pools. I waded into the shallow end, and then I fell forward, and then I'd hang, sagging toward the bottom. The sun warmed my neck around my ponytail, and I'd squint through the chlorine sting toward the bottom. Pebbled. Rough. On a curve I couldn't trace, either up or down.

As the water danced, it captured light in waves and hexagons. Their movement a re-



LYDIA FU

sponse to me, my relentless being. I stretched my eyes and looked harder. For a moment, I felt close. The film glazing my eyes seemed like a good sign.

Then I heard my brother's scream. Curved metal jabbed my ribs. The pool hook almost tore my suit as he dragged me vaudeville-style toward the side.

I twisted away, flipping wet hair from my eyes. "What was that for?"

Isaiah looked blurry through the chlorine film. "I thought—" he said.

I knew what he thought. For him, death was dull but final. You were alive or you weren't, there or gone. I didn't buy it. Talk skirted death like a surprise party, like a delicate tinted crystal. I had to know why. I wondered if we kept death out of our mouths because our tongues would smudge it.

At Isaiah's insistence, I avoided pools for a while. Instead, I'd walk Pasha in the afternoons. Our cocker spaniel could only walk 20 minutes at a go. Then I'd have to carry him, his head on my shoulder like a toddler. But the last day of July, when I rounded the corner, the leash went slack. I heard a cough, a shudder, a high whine, then nothing. I stood alone beside fur that once wheezed.

I bent and pressed a hand to Pasha's ribs. Maybe I didn't know where a dog's heart was. I tried everywhere, found nothing. Pasha's fur was still soft. His sides weren't moving. His eyes, open, yawned.

I scooped up Pasha and carried him home. He was both easier and more difficult to carry than before. More docile, denser. We crossed the muddy grass to the edge of the pool.

I don't know if Dad yelled before or after. In my memory, the yell blooms at the same time as the splash.

Pasha's fur spread like algae on the water, his tawny ears tinted green. His tail stuck out like a rudder. ➔

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Dad ushered me inside, grim. From the back door, I watched him stand at the pool with his hands in his pockets. The sun glinted off the gray in his hair, the gold disc on Pasha's collar, the ladder. I saw Dad's shoulders move. Then I saw him reach for the hook.

I wondered what Pasha saw at the bottom. The pebbled hill I'd seen, going both ways at once. Or light refracted in a single strand of yellow, a focused beam through a prism. 



✓ RACHAL DUGGAN

The Accountant

By GRADY CHAMBERS

THERE HAD BEEN a change in my life.

I had taken a position in an office in the city, on the eighth floor of a tall building plotted amidst the rise of many other tall buildings. From the outset I must admit that at that time, I felt that something urgent—though I do not know what, or from whom—was trying to be communicated to me. Each day I entered the office, I saw Delores. She arrived before me, and stayed until I left. In that way she became a bookend to my hours allotted to the office: I entered the narrow room; she held me for that time; and I was released.

There are five facts I can offer with certainty about her life: She was an accountant. She believed in ghosts. She had a strange saying: *The truth about cats and dogs*, it went, *is I never had a life*. She was a mother to a daughter, and had a grown son who lived at home. She drank, it was clear to me, though it became clear by small degrees.

Time was passing. A month came with two full moons. The same severed bottle remained in the same place in the municipal plaza. Inside our office, Delores's face swung toward me like a gate.

She'd begun to tell a story.

Her daughter had complained of the presence of a ghost. There was a closet outside of which the girl could feel a difference in the air. Delores divulged—and this would be the sixth fact from her life I know—that Delores had become, when young, estranged from her father. It was in this closet his ashes were kept. It was his spirit, she said, who haunted her daughter.

I have pictured that house many times: white, narrow, several levels. From her bedroom, Delores said, she'd heard her daughter scream—outside the closet, a hand had touched the girl's shoulder—but when the girl had turned, no one was there.

Was the presence, Delores asked, a man's or a woman's? The girl said a woman's. It was at this point in the story that Delores turned and looked at me. The girl, she said, had given the ghost a name. She'd named it Chardonnay.

Not long after she told this story, Delores left. She'd become, it was explained, unreliable. One morning she stood up from her desk and said, simply, "It is irrelevant that I cannot do this," choked out a laugh, and left. In hindsight I believe she meant to say "evident," but her specific phrasing has never left me. It returns, sometimes, before I sleep.

The meaning of this story is not entirely clear to me. Delores, the small room we shared

amidst the vast structures, the downcast eyes of the stone saints in the city lot. So much time has passed. So much time has passed, but some days something brings her back—the dark hole, say, of a single window missing on an office building's face. 

Widower

By SALEM COLLO-JULIN

IT HAPPENED IN the store before I got there. Paul was cleaning already and badgered me until I gave up my smoke break and clocked in early too. The man was a regular, weekly refill of his toilet paper, applesauce, rye bread. Fell into an end cap of cans. A pyramid of corn and beans busted onto the floor and rolled into produce. "They called it a 'widowmaker,'" Paul said, "but they said his wife died last year, right? So he was a male widow—with a widowmaker?"

"Widower," I said. "A male widow is a widower."

We work overnight shift and always have to clean up some sort of crap. Mostly dumping out stinky diapers from the back bathroom or finding a whole bunch of caps and needles and then spray-bleaching the hell out of everything. Every once in a while, something like this happens out front. Two years ago, a girl who looked like Mr. Johnson's daughter ran out the back door as the alarm was going off, and by the time Paul called me to get there, a

crowd had formed around the puddle of blood and what looked like pus. Discharge, they said, a miscarriage. "I don't get paid enough for this," Paul shouted at no one, as we put on our heavy-duty gloves. 



✓ LYDIA FU

A Blessing and a Curse

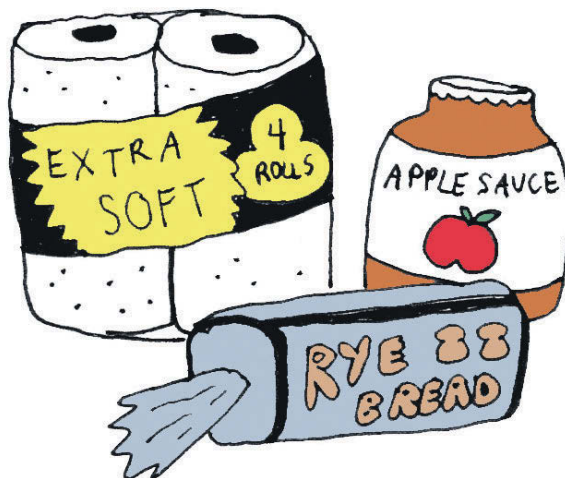
By RAINN VILLALPANDO

I DIDN'T HAVE the language for it at the time, but the uptick in *limpias de huevo* after I had accidentally left the photo of a semi-nude male model up on the family computer sat with me like an intervention. "Calvin klein underwear model" was the Google search that had betrayed me while I was in the bathroom jerking off. When I returned, he was still there, thumbs hooked under his waistband, his body propped up against an assemblage of lumber. I was hard in my Hanes. The plate of *plátano rebanado* delivered by her liver-spotted hands let me know that she had been there in my absence. She had seen.

She approached me within the week, waiting until I was distracted with my Nintendo 64. I was lucky that the ladies of *Primer Impacto* hadn't already persuaded her into confiscating the system, adding it to her list of things that were *del demonio*.

My adventures with Spyro the Dragon were an essential escape for me as the awkward, gay kid in junior high—days when gym classes ran as long as the list of things I didn't have in common with the white kids at Saint Viator: sunburns, athletic inclinations, summer trips to Lake Geneva. I wasn't part of the Old Irving Park crew—I grew up in Avondale, the mention of which raised as many questions as the pronunciation of my last name, long before

✓ RACHAL DUGGAN



the beards appeared when Honey Butter Fried Chicken replaced La Finca on the corner of Elston and Roscoe.

Padre nuestro, que estás en el cielo, santificado sea tu nombre . . . She crossed the threshold, not bothering to knock first or say hello. She wielded an egg, tracing delicate circles through the air, processing forward with stooped back and a sheen across her lenses. My wide eyes darted back and forth between her and the TV as I mashed buttons and gritted my teeth. The treasure on-screen distracted me, her serape was already touching my bare skin, and so I gave in. The other dragons would thank me later.

I stared straight ahead, squeal-murmuring like the last air leaving a balloon as she ran the cold egg across my limbs. She paid special attention to my neck, gently carving switchbacks into the back of my skull, haunting my ears with her incantation. If I had been the only grandson, they would have taken me to see Father Alejandro with so much at stake. The egg was a mercy. Goosebumps stayed with me after she left, taking with her my *vibras malas* and the willpower I needed to defeat Gnasty Gnorc.

The next time I saw her, she carried on as if the encounter had never happened, as if nothing had been seen—no blessing needed absent a curse. ■



■ RACHAL DUGGAN

The Rules of Golf

By JOSEPH GUSZKOWSKI

HIS CADDY HAD been fucking up all morning, and now he'd disappeared. Denton had hooked a ball into the trees on ten and sent the caddy after it. There'd been no sign of him since. Now Denton leaned next to the snack cart, out of the sun, squinting at where the boy had gone into the pines.

"Caddy's asleep today," he said. The cart girl smiled and nodded. He set an empty Coors on

the counter and headed across the fairway.

It was cool and quiet in the trees. His bag stood at the foot of a pine; his ball sat nearby. No sign of the caddy. Denton crouched over the ball and peered through the foliage, considering his shot. "Bullshit." He made sure he was alone and, getting to his feet, plucked up the ball. A voice came from the sky.

"Rules of golf, rule 18. Ball at rest moved."

Denton looked up. His caddy sat on a branch 30 feet above him, legs dangling, a small book open in his hand.

"Article 2. Except as permitted by the rules, when a player's ball is in play—"

"Very funny. Very clever." Denton dropped the ball. "There. Now get down and do your job."

The caddy sighed. "I'm afraid I may have to take this to Fletch, sir. As I'm sure you're aware, cheating is not taken lightly at Wildwood."

Kevin Fletcher was the club pro—a man of integrity, well respected, and a damn good golfer. Denton hated him.

"Cut the crap and get down here. Five iron, let's go."

The caddy sighed. "OK, but it'll cost you." He pulled out Denton's wallet, evidently lifted from its hiding place in his golf bag, and began peeling bills from it. "How does \$200 sound?"

Denton lunged forward and dug his cleats into one of the pine's lower branches. He ascended, clambering from bough to bough, cursing the caddy through gritted teeth. The caddy cackled as Denton's sunburned scalp rose through the branches, the tree shuddering and swaying as if in a storm.

Then there was a crack, a crash, and a thud. Denton's world went blank.

When he came to, Kevin Fletcher was standing over him, holding out a hand. Denton took it and the pro hoisted him up.

"There we go. You all right? Looks like you had quite a fall."

"I'm fine." It hurt just to brush the pine needles off his ass.

"Good. Your caddy came and got me."

"My caddy." Denton reached into his bag, felt his wallet there.

"He said you treed your ball. What are the odds?" Fletcher appraised the tree. "Now, I'd have recommended deeming that ball unplayable."

He reached into his back pocket and handed Denton a small book. "Rules of golf, rule 28."

Denton stared at it. A cartoon golfer grinned back, midswing.

"That's your bible," Fletcher said. "Save you some hardship. OK? Be careful out here."

Denton waited until Fletcher was gone and tore the book in two. ■

Telephone Call From Istanbul

By SUZANNE SCANLON

THEY GET HITCHED under his family chuppah in the window of a storefront theater in Andersonville, the same neighborhood where they'll live with the baby, born two years later. There are candles and flowers, and strangers walk by, gawking; the woman wears a long dress. A week later, she'll move to Istanbul and the man will stay here; but that night, they sing along to Tom Waits.

A month earlier, scanning items for a registry, a salesgirl asks the woman, "But what if you don't like it?" She means Istanbul. She means Turkey. She means *a Muslim country*. The woman doesn't answer. *What if?* she thinks. *I've not liked many places.* She can't

explain. She just knows she has to leave, has to flee this continent, has to travel far from home. *There was always a November in my soul.*

He drops her at the airport with four overstuffed duffel bags, full up with clothes and shoes and books; she wears a brown velour tracksuit but hasn't expected to feel this particular sadness. She hasn't known how much she could love, perhaps, until that moment, waiting in security. He is back in his Toyota, on I-90, and she's here with bags and strangers and the dread of early-aughts post-9/11 protocols.

Later, when it is over, he writes: *I didn't want her until she told me she was leaving our city, moving to an unstable foreign country straddling two continents. I didn't want her until I imagined her moving between the European and the Asian side, her face on two continents.*

A flight attendant hands her a Turkish breakfast. Clotted cream, simit, tea. She would live in the *lojmanlar*, *number yermi yeti kat iki*; when he arrives, it is snowing. He writes poems in the guest room of the well-appointed two-bedroom condo, something like the ➔



■ LYDIA FU

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Hilton, new and shiny and generic. Not home, but a home, he whispers. From the lojman window, she can glimpse the Black Sea.

Later, she'll wish she were him, wish she could recognize the end. Later, she'll know what he knew: better to be the one who leaves than the one left behind. Later, he writes: *She didn't want me until someone else wanted me. And I didn't want me until someone else wanted me.*

Her new friends don't believe her, don't know he is real. It's a beautiful story: that they know they can survive this absence because they are married, because they have *the rest of their lives* together. *I would follow you anywhere*, he says. **■**



DANIEL FISHEL

Patterns

By BECCA LAMARRE

I **WOULDN'T CALL** myself obsessive-compulsive, but I do have patterns. If I don't follow them, I get nervous, my skin feels wavy. Train rides are the worst. Maybe because my mind is free to wander. Music being pumped directly into my ears via tiny white speakers while I'm being chauffeured over and under the city streets only heightens things. There are two things I must do in order to keep myself settled:

1. I position my feet exactly one shoe length apart, one facing forward and the other slightly pointed toward the exit I will take. (Doors open on the right at Chicago and State.)

2. I find someone on the train whom I deem an alternate version of myself. Sometimes this is difficult if it's not crowded, but usually I can find someone sharing thoughts with me. This person can come in any shape or size. I may know by the way they hold their hands

or have a crumb of breakfast left over in the corner of their mouth. Most recently, this was an old man with a yellowed collar and knotted hands clenched around the top of an equally knotted cane. I sat down right next to him, positioned my feet, and knew right away. I ached to rest my head on his shoulder. It was painful. My head weighed a million pounds. It started to drift over, but then I caught the eye of the scrappy guy in skate shoes sitting across from me. I straightened. I realized he might be thinking I was an alternate version of him.

I've come to realize that the thing with my feet doesn't help me keep balance when standing. I realize this and I know nothing of physics. Except that I'm infinitely drawn to you.

You. Things didn't work, and I told myself it wasn't meant to be. I was good at leaving, and you were good at being left. You didn't seem to care. Where I was desperate, you were quiet, calm, never drastic. I'd worn you out.

You still have not really called. Maybe you're looking at your hands. Maybe you've found out where I work and you'll meet me at the door one Tuesday morning. You've been watching me as I approach. I'm shocked but thrilled.

"Call in sick," you say.

"But I'm already here," I laugh.

You don't laugh. Instead you plead with me to take a walk along the lake.

We walk and sit and run and climb ledges. Maybe you tell me I'm your ghost, how you seek my ghost approval when combing your bangs down your forehead or falling in love with a new song. The morning light flies off the waves in splinters. We never touch. Our heads come close, but there's an atomic gap between. I want to punch you in the stomach. I want to bury my face in your jacket.

I ride the Red Line home. I keep my feet together, looking at nothing and no one. **■**

View of the Lake

By MEGAN KIRBY

HE RETURNS TO her apartment with his whole body vibrating at the joy of being a good boy, a clever boy, and finding his way home. His leash is still attached to his collar, though it is wet and discolored from dragging in the streets.

Ivan has not answered his cell phone in over 12 hours, not since he left this morning in his blue windbreaker, dog tugging him out the door before he could even kiss her goodbye, and he had called out—what? What had he



LYDIA FU

called out? The wind had been loud, had crackled against the loose window frames.

She falls to her knees when she sees the dog, holds his big head between her hands, lets his broad pink tongue wet her face. She'd always wanted a big dog, and she's proud of her ability to keep him under control in the city. Look, sit. Look, heel. Look at what a good boy, what a clever boy.

But where is Ivan?

She thinks out loud—a mugging, a car accident, or maybe, maybe, Ivan tied the dog up outside of some cafe while he grabbed a cup of coffee and the dog pulled loose and now Ivan is out looking for the dog—yes, that has to be it. And she calls Ivan's phone again, where it goes straight to voice mail, and she starts to leave a message but only gets out a breathy syllable, a hissed beginning of hello, before she hangs up.

She sits backward on the couch facing the lake. The dog has his head in her lap. He cannot believe his luck, to be allowed above the floor. She strokes his ears absently, watching the gray waves fade to the gray sky.

Her phone vibrates. They have found the body in the lake.

It's the windbreaker the woman says she noticed, a flash of blue in the waves, and then—horribly—the pale fluttering of a limp human hand.

Two police officers with legal pads offer hushed explanations. The dog chews a bone. The wind crackles the windows. No foul play suspected. Strong wind today. Strong current. Strong dog.

She stands at the window and faces the lake. The dog whines. Good boy, clever boy, finding his way home. She always wanted a big dog. She always wanted a view of the lake.

She thinks, as she stares out the window, that tomorrow when everyone has gone she will bring a suitcase of her things to the lakefront and drop them in one by one—a dictionary, a moccasin, a pair of knit gloves. She will pay attention to what floats and what sinks, what the water claims and what it gives back. **■**



LYDIA FU

In Threes

By ADRIANNE BEER

MY MOTHER IS a superstitious woman. She warns me not to drink on full moons, and every time someone dies she reminds us that death comes in threes. I am always writing down my dreams and waiting for the third shoe to drop. I was 17 when she lost her family in threes.

When my great aunt and uncle Kirila died, we wondered who would be next. Our bets were on my grandmother. Within the month, my mother's sister fell dead in front of a Pennsylvania casino. We were shocked but finally able to breathe. Better her than us. Two days after my aunt's funeral, my grandmother died in her sleep. I said she died to keep our aunt company; my mother said it was to iron my aunt's wings. That made four. I could have believed my mother was wrong about threes if she hadn't been right about everything she ever said. We knew two more had to go. Our nuclear family consisted of my sister, mother, and me. My father had died when I was four. It was a train accident. He was on the Amtrak from Chicago to Cleveland when the conductor fell asleep. Only three people died in the crash. Our next-door neighbor and our dog-sitter happened to be the other two.

It wasn't until I was 16 that my mother let me get on the el. She made me go alone, forcing my sister on a bus even though we were heading to the same location.

There was a 14-year gap where no one we knew died. In that time, my sister's high school English teacher survived pancreatic cancer, my mother's coworker received a heart transplant, and I saw the neighbor's cat get hit by a car and stroll away. During those years we felt safe; my mother's odd tendencies seemed

to quiet themselves. She still hung what she claimed was a saint's bone over the door but no longer forced us out of the bathtub when she saw a blackbird. After my grandmother died, these traits all came back even worse. Since fate needed two more, we were certain it would be my sister and me. My mother never said this aloud, but we knew she was thinking it when she kept us away from each other. She thought this would increase our odds of survival.

For a month our world was made of worry. Then, one Monday during dinner, my mother got a call.

"Oh God, I'm so sorry to hear that. Please let me know if we can do anything. Yeah. Good-bye." She hung up the only house phone left in Chicago and said, "Your cousins Timmy and Tommy died in a car accident." We were respectfully silent for a moment; then my mother said, "I always thought they were creeps." The three of us erupted in cheers. My mother searched the cupboard for a box cake while my sister popped a dusty bottle of sparkling apple cider. 📺

Not a Date

By JORDAN WEIR

IT'S NOT A date. We are just going to eat greasy food together and converse between bites.

No, I didn't put more pomade in my hair than usual.

No, that's not cologne (it's my scented deodorant).

Yes, I wear it all the time.

No, she won't be coming back here after.

Yes, you are annoying me. *Bye*.

The food was certainly greasy, I was right about that. Just the right amount. Enough grease left at the bottom of the fry box so that you could busy yourself by mopping it up with a finger if there was a lull in conversation. There wasn't one, though, so it was good that the food wasn't too greasy. Well-balanced grease, well-oiled, like a machine.

That's how the conversation went. Smooth as melted halloumi. Felt like we'd ridden each

other a few times before, a test-drive at least. I was certainly excited for another round; the sweat on my palms was nearly as copious as the grease.

What a good thing to have such exuberant conversation with a friend!

And the grease wasn't too slick, you know, it sunk right in. We became soggy with it. What I mean is that the conversation reached a nice, penetrative level of depth. None of that surface-level bullshit, slide-right-off-your-ass floor-wax type of grease—this stuff changed the very texture of the words we spoke.

Get this:

We talked about our favourite colors. We talked about our favourite colors in a way that I have never talked about color before in my God-fearing life. We talked about having love affairs with colors. (You know how sexuality is fluid? So is color orientation. I bet you didn't know that.) She's really into blue these days, has some kind of lapis lazuli LED light in her room that she's been staring at for days on end. And me, I've been into red without even realizing it. The autumn leaves, so many maples in

this city, the brick houses, the streetcars. Red has been calling out to me since September 22, the autumnal equinox, when the brilliant yellow of summer raged into fire right before my eyes, right outside my doorstep where the big maple sheds its blood.

But here's where it gets wild:

She's a fire sign, Leo. Seriously. Fire = red.

And I, if it isn't obvious, am a water sign, Scorpio. Water = blue. Seriously.

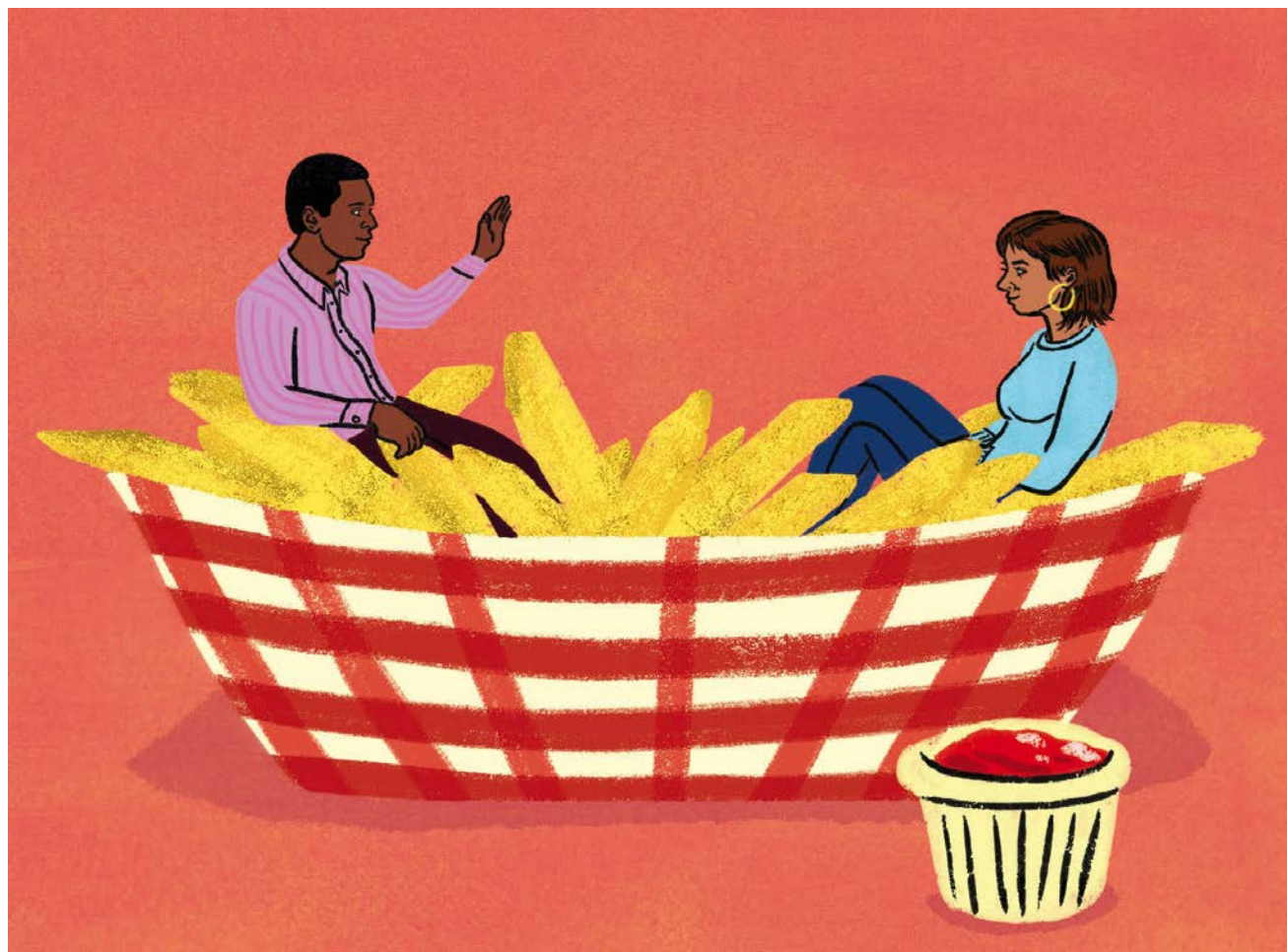
I am her favourite color (for the time being, at least).

And she is my favourite color (indefinitely).

How nice, to have a friend who's your favorite!

Red and blue make purple, but purple is too slippery (or else my mind is) for me to make anything out of it yet. Purple could be a bruise or it could be a plum, you just don't know. Purple could be fun and fruity, or it could be the apocalyptic sky.

Staring into my fries, I wondered what kind of purple we'd become if we slipped into each other, platonically. 📺



✓ DANIEL FISHEL



✓ LYDIA FU

Melusine

by JESSICA CAMPBELL

THIS STORY WILL end with a woman swallowing the world, as all true stories must.

Before that happens, we must ready the woman to be seen. We must prepare her to be spotted by the prince. We must turn her into a fair maiden, for no matter how they end, ➔

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this is how stories begin, with a glimpse of a maiden.

So, here goes. Turn the woman into a maiden. Pull her limbs until they are lean. Lengthen the legs. Soften the arms. Hack off the claws. Stop up the gills. Scrape off the scales. The tail . . . the tail is impossible. We will have to coil it tightly around her waist and hope the borrowed skin holds it in place.

The borrowed skin must be supple and pale and unmarked. It must fit closely, and if the woman finds this suffocating . . . well, that can't be helped. Cinch it tightly. Smooth out any bulges. Now, look at her. Is she ready to be seen? Will she catch the prince's eye? Let us hope so, for if she doesn't, this story is going nowhere, this story will never reach its promised end.

There. Set her down in that pretty vale. Sink her waist-deep in that sacred spring. Wait for the prince to happen by. Wait for the prince to glimpse the maiden, fresh and apparently scaleless.

The prince pulls the maiden from the water. He forgets, or pretends not to know, that a girl is a box that holds a monster.

He makes the requisite promise.

He places his promise on her tongue in the shape of a golden key.

A castle erupts from the ground at the maiden's feet. In this castle are bulging storerooms and fur-laden bedchambers, the prince's reward for making his promise, for doing as the story demands. There is also one room in the castle the prince may not enter, a room he has promised not to enter. This room contains a bath, large enough to douse a dragon.

The golden key lies heavy on the maiden's tongue. It is the weight of this key that prevents the woman inside the borrowed skin from breathing holocausts and screaming hurricanes. The prince forgets or pretends not to know this.

The only time the maiden removes the golden key from her tongue is to enter the room. The only time the woman removes the maiden's skin is to enter the bath. Perhaps there are times when this feels like a meager reward.

In stories, of course, maidens who question the proportions of their rewards do not fare well. Neither do princes, but this does not prevent them from stewing over the things they do not have, the rooms they may not enter.

One day, the prince steals the golden key from his beloved's tongue.

And you already know how this story ends. ▣



Untitled

By KELSEY GERBER

MICHAEL VALUED HIS cashiering job at CVS as if he were an investment banker. His dream was to work at the national office, despite my insistence that I would rather be dead than live in Woonsocket-where-the-fuck-is-that, Rhode Island. Every night, he ironed his employee polo, then used my straightening iron around the collar for an added crispness. I sat cross-legged on our bed, watching him spray a fine, even mist of distilled water over the navy cotton, following it with the smooth, sweeping movement of the iron. Michael would recite all of the current sales, as if I gave a damn that the Fleet Adult Enema Twin-Pack was 50 cents off. I feigned interest and focused instead on the tautness of the muscles in his ironing arm.

After 20 minutes, Michael would methodically hang his polo on the back of the bedroom door and brush his teeth, all the while sharing that the toothpaste was only \$1.22 or that I should stock up on tampons while the store brand was buy-one-get-one. I suffered through

his garbled, foaming sales pitch, studying the curve of his back as he bent over the bathroom sink.

Finally, he would turn to me. We made love slowly every night and without a condom, since they were rarely on sale. Michael was the only cure I had ever found for my chronic insomnia. So long as we made love, I fell asleep sweaty and tingling.

One winter night, Michael came to bed uninterested. I slid my hand down his abs beneath the sheets, but an inch from my destination, his hand seized mine and brought it back up to his chest. "Babe, do you remember Tim from Nebraska?" he asked, continuing before I could answer. "Well, I ran into him today in Skin Care. He's a pastor now and we had a long conversation about abstinence before marriage and it started to make sense . . ."

His voice trailed off, but I didn't need to hear the rest. How dare "Two-Timing" Tim bring his newfound God into our lives? Michael rolled away from me and began to breathe heavily. I offered this God a deal, praying for sleep in exchange for chastity. As Michael's breathing turned to snores, I begged.

The next morning, beams of sunlight slipped through the blinds and landed on my burning eyes as Michael leaned over me and whispered "goodmorninggoodbye" in my ear. After I heard the click of the front door, I grabbed our shopping list and slipped out the back. By the time Michael's shift was over, all of his belongings were on the snowy curb, neatly packed into Walgreens bags. As he tried his key in the new lock, I took a drink of wine every time the buzzer sounded. ▣

Greenhouse

By JUSTIN KAMP

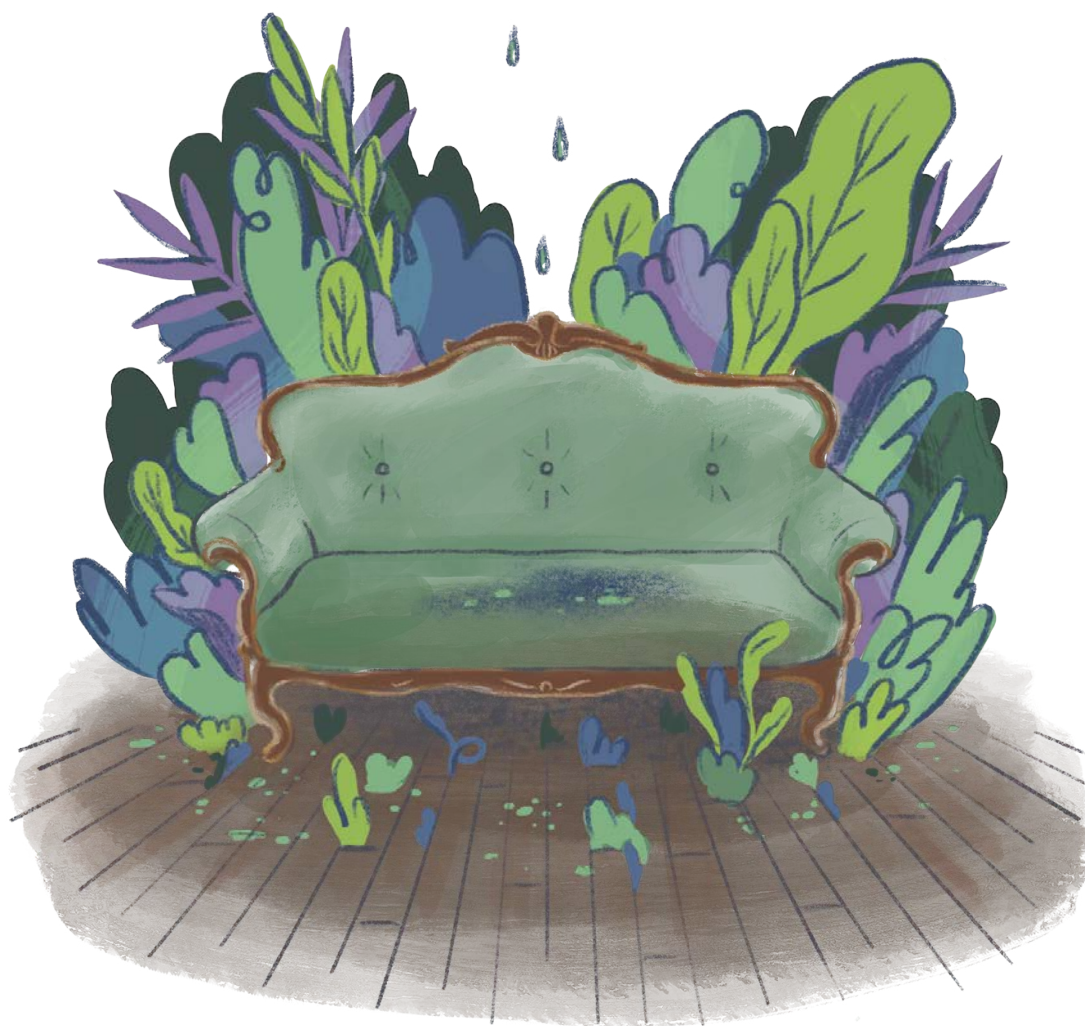
THE PIPES BURST upstairs the other day. And so soon after we moved in. We shouldn't be surprised, I suppose. For better or worse, and all. But still. What started as a creeping water stain soon became a gentle rainfall, and now our home is starting to bloom. There's moss and flowers and tiny ferns everywhere we look.

The only thing we had was the couch. It was a mid-century, one I had found at an estate sale. The woman I bought it from called it an heirloom, and she spoke about it in terms of investing, of value retention and appreciation. It was stained and sopping after the first night, and by night two it was covered in a blanket of lichens. This is, in a word, alarming. We've asked for someone to come in to test the air for mold, someone who can hopefully stop this endless rain. Someone to pry under our tiles and tell us what we have here.

The growths spread like a bruise. Every day they eat up more of this place. We had a plan, you see. Cowhide rugs. His records on the wall. Prints, sketches, chairs made from wicker and oak. Things like bread boxes and mason jars as cups and artisanal bars of soap. A natural heft to everything, a minimization of the type of hokey plastic waste that had subsumed both of our homes growing up. We were committed to the idea of living purposefully and beautifully, of being selective about the things we buy. This is not what we planned. The entire first floor is covered in a thick coat of green. Everything is tangled together. We can't hardly walk in our own house.

At night the rain pitter-patters across our faces so we can't sleep. Another thing we've learned to accept. Our plan folds in on itself like a schoolyard game, the type we made out of paper and wrote the name of our future on. The plants have taken everything from us,

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LYDIA FU

and we continue to give to them. We buy food and fertilizer and scatter it on the floor. He's taken to measuring the heights of the vines. We mark their growth on our doorframes with pencil marks. A day will come when our house is swallowed whole by the earth and its tendrils, and we will sit in dark dirt forever, and we will be cared for. 

Cheryl's Laundry

By ALEX KINSEL

HANDI-WASH OUT BY the interstate was cheaper, \$1.25 per load. I preferred Cheryl's Laundry on the other side of town. There were no TVs. A true perk.

I'm not sure if Cheryl is a real person. I've never seen her. When I imagine her, she looks a lot like my grandmother but instead of piecrust flour all over her, she is covered in suds.

That July it was 100 degrees for 18 straight days. Carl would pull his car up to the open

door and blast music. Old stuff. R&B. Stax.

We'd sit there, backs to the rattle of spin cycles, looking out into the parking lot.

Once a day, a truck drove by stuffed full from the chicken farm down the road. One time, I saw a chicken fall off and, dazed by how large the world suddenly was, break its neck on the pavement.

On Thursday, two young kids appear out of the sun that flares up as traffic passes. They cross the street and dart through the door, waving to Carl like they know him. They start running up and down the aisles, giggling.

"They're nice kids. Mom lives next door. Works days. No babysitter."

We turn back to the window, the heat rising in waves off blacktop. A shriek over the music sends us running to the kids.

The brother is standing there and can't talk. He can only whimper, staring into the drum of a machine like it's a shark that's been sawed open to reveal a human foot. He reaches to pull the door open but can't, doesn't. Carl looks through the port window into the guts of the dryer. He steps back. I step up.

The glass is bent, concave, so everything looks farther away. I feel like I'm looking into a shoebox diorama. Like I'm looking into a reality that hasn't ever existed.

The sister is in there, her neck broken. The blood vessels have burst so it looks like she's got a necklace of roses on. Like one of the



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chickens thrown from the truck, everything about her is downy, too frail to have ever been alive, let alone to die. She's pissed her pants and her eyelids are fluttering. She looks peaceful. She's dying.

Not looking at anybody, Carl goes, "Think I gave them those quarters."

He walks sideways out of Cheryl's, like someone who had just stopped spinning and needs to keep his horizon line straight so he doesn't fall over from dizziness. He starts his car, drives off. The music fades as he turns onto the road. With the silence, the humidity rushes back in. I don't see Carl anymore after that.

I still go to Cheryl's for a bit. Soon they get an attendant. Always right behind you, hovering over you like a ghost as you pump quarters into the washer. The attendant complains that it's boring. So they get a radio. And then just after that, a TV. And then Cheryl's is ruined. 



DANIEL FISHEL

Vitals

By MARIE SCHUTT

IN THE LAST hours of your life, the Memorial people came to sit with me at Weiss. I watched a machine breathe for you while they told me my options. They offered the memorial biotattoo, the voicebox-hologram combo. I wanted everything, every scrap of you that I could keep, but I couldn't pay for any of it. I stopped listening when they launched into down payments and interest rates.

This spiel had been rehearsed and optimized for the deathbed, I could tell, countless times.

We're sorry we have to have this conversation now, they said, clearing their throats. ➔

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But you understand—the timing. Then, when I got up to make them leave, throats now clear: There are other, less premium options.

So I gave them my number—a stage of grieving I had not prepared for—the most I could pay to preserve something of you. Your hand was still and warm in my grip.

You can have her dreams, they said.

Days later, I found myself in the little Memori capsule office, stuck like a barnacle on the side of the funeral home on Western where we'd had your service. By then, there was one affixed to every funeral home in the city.

I fidgeted in the tiny lobby, decorated with baby succulents in trendy planters. Icy November rain fell outside. I thought about how you'd become a cold thing in the cold ground, too young. A Memori rep emerged to receive me.

We recommend starting off with something simple, like a small screen and headphones, the rep, Amber, said gently. If you were to interface for the first time in a VR headset, for example, you'd be overwhelmed.

The Somnofeed™ was a database of your brain's REM activity. Through Memori's patented extraction method, data from your most potent REM cycles was harvested and translated into a format readable by a number of consumer devices.

Of course, she continued, We have a selection of cutting-edge hardware available for purchase here, if you need.

Cutting-edge hardware wasn't in my budget. I'd have to ease myself in with my outdated iPhone, then work up to the 32-inch LED TV you'd fought bitterly with me to upgrade before you became too weak to care.

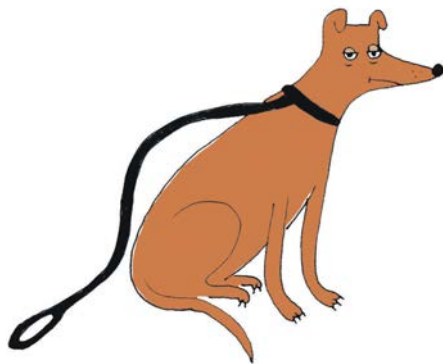
Amber handed me a small silver drive. Everything was in there, all of you that my money could buy.

Remember, the Somnofeed™ shows you only what the deceased experienced, she told me. If you don't sync with a VR suit or room, you'll only get the visuals and audio. In that case, you'll likely experience a disjointed stream of images and sounds. It won't make much sense.

But! She continued, raising her eyebrows and folding my fingers over the drive, Confusing as it may be, this data is priceless! Remember that. The Somnofeed™ allows you to experience some of the most intimate moments your loved one had with his or her subconscious.

Her, I said. Her subconscious.

Amber nodded delicately. We sat there in silence until I handed over my credit card. 



RACHAL DUGGAN

Dog Walker's Notes 7/23/18-7/26/18

By DAN SHEEHAN

HEY BRIAN & Jamie!

I'm Dan! As David explained in his last note, he recently took another position so I'll be your new dog walker! But don't worry, Gracie's in good hands with me! I'll be following all of our standard procedures in my notes, and, per your request, I'll be sure to mention any irregularities with her stool. I'm sorry to hear she's had digestive trouble in the past, but I'll be sure to pay close attention! Today Gracie took a 32-minute walk around Mary Bartelme Park and the surrounding area. She peed twice and pooped! I'll be back tomorrow at one!

Also, couldn't help but notice the wedding invitations on the counter! Congratulations!

Thanks,
Dan

Hey Brian & Jamie!

Today was normal! We took a 34-minute walk through the park where she peed, and then we went once more around the block to make sure she pooped. One little blip: it looked like Gracie might've knocked over some things from the counter—I came in to find some trash strewn around and unfortunately your invitations had been knocked onto the floor. She must have jumped up onto one of the bar stools. I'm so sorry if this is my fault—I didn't arrive until 1:03 today. But it looks like luckily the invitations weren't ruined! I'll be sure to arrive early tomorrow to prevent any further issues.

Thanks,
Dan

Hey Brian!

I'm sorry for the mix-up, I had not been told that Jamie was no longer living with you. I'll be sure to remove her from our client list and address all future notes correctly. There were no further issues with the trash! I made sure to take it out for you! It was a bit overstuffed and some cans had dropped onto the floor. Since certain beers can be bad for dogs' digestive systems, I figured I'd save you the trip and make sure Gracie was out of harm's way!

Thanks,
Dan

Brian,

I saw your note and I am SO sorry for throwing away what I thought was trash—I thought I was being helpful. I will not touch any of your personal belongings in the future.

I think maybe Gracie was in a bad mood today. She seemed distant and sad. Losing someone can be traumatic for a dog. They often feel lost and confused when someone they saw every day decides to leave and doesn't say why. That's OK, I think. It's a lot to process. And Gracie's a good dog, I think she'll be OK. I would just take some time to play with her tonight. She's always happy to see you.

Also Gracie's stool was VERY weird today. Runny but also chunky. Sorry to be so vivid. I'm not a vet so I'm not sure which details are important. I know you'd said you wanted to know so now you know.

Thanks!
Dan 

Run

By VALYA DUDYCZ LUPESCU

GINGERBREAD MOTHERS KNOW we will be consumed by our children. Bite by bite, we teach them gratitude. We teach them that treasures take time: homes, stories, relationships. We teach them to run.

My son takes my hand and raises it to his lips for a kiss before taking a bite—just a nibble at first, followed by quick hungry mouthfuls up to the elbow. At 13, he towers over me; and when he gently places a peck on my cheek, I do not flinch; for he is kind and takes only what he needs.

"I love you, little Mama," he says, going off to play the piano, leaving me to wash off the saucy remnants of dinner one-handed.

My youngest daughter, stalling from her homework, hugs me from behind and asks,

"When will we have to run?"

She is always ready to run.

"I don't know," I say honestly.

She sits on the floor beside me, "I think my teachers hate me."

"I'm sorry," I say, because I'm not sure if it's true or if she imagines it, and either option makes me sad.

She bites my ankle. I'm startled by the sudden crunch of it and catch myself on the counter.

"I never mean to hurt you," she says, her voice shaking. "Never."

"I know."

Slightly wobbling, I keep washing and get her to sing a favorite song to keep us both distracted.

"I love you, Mama," she says when finished.

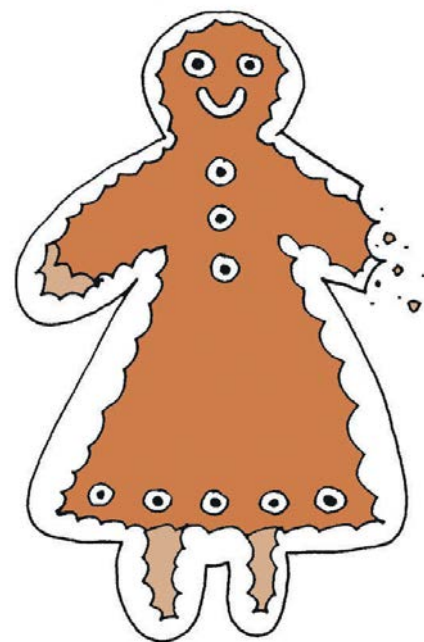
Crumbs collected in the corners of her mouth, I see her exercising restraint, fighting not to bite off my entire foot.

Already useless, I break it off below the bitten ankle and hand it to her to devour in two impossible bites.

She goes off to chase after the cat.

Every day I worry about giving them what they need. I have nightmares about angry fists pounding on our door, large grinning mouths with too many teeth, voices shouting: We are going to devour you.

As I sweep crumbs off the floors, my oldest comes by and offers to make us some tea. While we wait for the water to boil, she helps me clean up.



RACHAL DUGGAN

"I'm afraid you'll disappear," she says in earnest, eyeing all that's missing.

I hug her close, and as she bites my shoulder, I tell her, "I always find ways to fill in the missing bits."

What I don't tell her is that even when the missing pieces grow back and the cracks heal, they always ache.

Later, when everyone is asleep and the house is quiet, I fill myself with music and words and wine. I make plans that give me hope, then crash hard into sleep to dream of outrunning death. Or is it fate? Or maybe fear?

When they leave me, I stand in the doorway.

"Remember you are not running away but toward something," I shout ginger-hearted into the wind. "Choose wisely. Run as fast as you can! Someday I will catch you!" ❧

Best Dog

By ALLISON MANLEY

MY DOG IS the best dog. He's well trained, and he likes to cuddle, but there's other things, too. Like the other day, I took him for a walk, and some asshole called me something he shouldn't have. My dog killed the man by breathing a thick stream of blue fire. He didn't even bark. When he was done, he tugged at the leash because he wanted to smell some other dog's pee.

Another time, I brought my dog with me when I was visiting my boyfriend (now fiancé), who lived in D.C. While my boyfriend was at work, my dog and I went on a long walk, sticking to some of the less crowded streets. Because I can't resist my dog's cute face—and because normally he's well behaved—I let *him* lead *me* for a while. He seemed to know exactly where to go, since we'd get to a corner and he'd know which direction to turn, no pause-and-sniff needed. Turned out, there was a bird, a giant one that had escaped from a corporate lab, flying in the area. It didn't kill anyone, but a lot of people got hurt (and even more people were covered in shit). My dog knew that bird was coming, and he had led me away from it so we didn't get hurt or shit on. Later that afternoon, I was able to see my then-boyfriend-now-fiancé birdshit-free.

Earlier, before I met my fiancé, I was seeing this guy. (My dog never liked him.) He was maybe less sentimental than other guys I would date, but at the time, he seemed like he had a good head on his shoulders (whatever

that means). About a month into the relationship, I was about to go on my laptop, and I saw that my dog had hacked the guy's Facebook page. His little puppy paws were typing a status update, one letter at a time. Before I could stop him, my dog posted as if he were this guy, "I'm a rapist."

I find out later, the guy *was* a rapist. A few years earlier, he had assaulted a woman while she was asleep. He said he thought it was consensual. When I saw it on the news, I realized I didn't like that guy that much after all.

Usually at the end of the day, I'll plop into bed, and my dog will jump on the bed after me. Sometimes, he'll transform. When he does, the room glows soft white. In a moment that feels calm and warm, a hundred eyes appear on his body, and each of those eyes is looking at me, telling me that it's going to be OK.

He falls asleep with his tummy in the air. When he wakes up, he stretches, gets up, and shakes off the sleep. He loves eating early in the morning, so I go to his dish and feed him. He devours his food, then runs to his rope, and we play tug-of-war. ❧



LYDIA FU

Vinyl

By JESSE NICOLAUS

THE RECORD SKIPS. You're nine again. Your brother is twisting your arm behind your back and the pain feels so close but still so distant, as though it's happening to someone else. He

calls you a little shit for snitching. Then you're on the ground and the too-familiar taste of your own blood fills your mouth like molten copper.

And the record skips. Your cheeks are wet and your eyes are blurred and puffy, and all you can see is how beautiful the sunlight is coming down through the treetops. It could be a beautiful day, you think, as he drags you behind his bike down the path that cuts through the small patch of woods behind your house.

And the record skips. This time he is the one crying. You're 16 and he's 20 and you're both beyond drunk in his dorm. Your head is swimming from what he just told you through tears that must have been stuck in his eyes for a decade at this point the way they just keep coming. You can feel the shit beer and whiskey and weed pulling your head toward the pillow, but you know it won't take. Looking up at the bottom of his bunk, you silently trace the wood's grain with your heavy eyes. You'll both pretend not to remember much from that night, but you'll both carry the weight of ➔



RACHAL DUGGAN

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his secret where it sits hot and heavy in your heart, and when you're older you'll touch that hot stove in your chest. Just every so often. To feel its heat; to feel again.

And the record skips. Your phone is sitting on the table in front of you and you are watching it as each buzz of vibration makes it dance in a long, slow spiral. You know it's him. You know why he's calling again and you hate it. You hate the tinny quality of his screamed expletives through the earpiece. You hate that he can somehow still take and take and devour all your energy, all of you, and make you feel so small again.

And the record skips. You're down. You're down and he's on top of you and the cuts in your face from his ring are pouring blood. You can't see through the blood, and you can't feel his fists anymore, but you feel the way the bones in your head are sliding together and you know it's almost done. You hear the tail end of your favorite saxophone solo as he shrieks and slams you against the cabinet, and the record skips, and skips, and skips.

And the record skips. You're nine again. Your brother grabs your wrist with a look in his eye that is cold and void and every you that ever was and ever will be and ever couldn't be all stand in opposition. A chorus of you pours out of your mouth and the weight shatters him completely. And finally the record keeps playing. ■

Huérfanos

By HEATHER HOBBS

FIFTEEN DAYS ON your feet have led you here, a body among bodies, bronzed by the sun and damp with sweat. That morning, familiar faces offered you stale bread to split with your brother. They know your name and story. That's enough to consider themselves family now, lives knotted together by the rhythm of endless shuffling.

You still think of the three of you as orphans. Sometimes the word slips through your cracked lips too. Diego doesn't say anything. His memory of your parents is like yours: promises ten years old, phone calls to strangers in Chicago, old photographs that could belong to anyone. But your older sister María remembers. If she were here, she would say, *Ay, Lucía*, and beg the Lord's forgiveness.

Buses form a line. The soldiers tell you to get on, but there is no place to go back to,

only hunger and thirst. You carry home in the grooves of your torn sneakers.

Four years ago, you had a twin brother. Sebastián. As a child, you kept your hair short so people would mistake you for him, until adolescence reshaped your bodies, leaving you only the same puffed cheeks, the same silent laugh. Everyone referred to you as the twins, a name you wore better than your own, as though you two wound together so tightly you became one person.

When they took him, your footsteps became hollow.

It's his death that has you belonging to no one, no land or country. Sometimes, at night in the camps, you think you hear his voice,

and your throat closes up until Diego squeezes your palm, telling you *breathe*.

You had to leave María and her husband in a city hospital along the way, their son sick with the fever that spread around, the one optimistic tías call exhaustion.

You wouldn't want to be a mother. When María was pregnant, you dreamed of the doctors cutting her open and leaving her that way, her warm insides leaking onto the tile floor while your tía wiped the baby clean.

In front of you, a bus belches stale air. Soldiers help the tired on. By now, you know their faces. These people who are and aren't your family. Your body aches in places you can't name, and you think of those rubbery seats

made warm by the sun.

Outside the hospital, you kissed Angelito and told María, *See you in América*.

She said, *Si Dios quiere*, like your grandmother used to, in a sigh. It hurts—the things God wills. You can blame him for the land where he made you, for the womb he knit you into as though you didn't deserve better, for Sebastián, buried a thousand miles away. But still, those words taste like giving up.

Soldiers tell you there's no future ahead, but still these strangers walk. You turn from the bus and you notice how your sneakers compress the earth, mixing together all the places you've been. Hope, that second fever, is contagious too. ■



DANIEL FISHEL

THEATER

Lost girls

There's not much drama in *La Ruta*, but Isaac Gomez creates a series of persuasive snapshots.

By JUSTIN HAYFORD



La Ruta

📷 MICHAEL BROSILOW

RR *LA RUTA*
Through 1/27/19: Wed-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat-Sun 3 and 7:30 PM, Tue 7:30 PM; no performances Tue 12/25 or 1/1, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, 1650 N. Halsted, 312-335-1650, steppenwolf.org, \$30-\$89.

The rampant murders of women and girls in the Mexican border town of Ciudad Juárez have been the subject of global attention since the mid 1990s, when the phenomenon first began drawing international headlines. Journalists, activists, musicians, novelists, television producers, and filmmakers (for starters) have used the city's serial sexual assassinations to call for sweeping judicial reform as well as create danceable pop tunes (Tori Amos's "Juárez").

Perhaps most strikingly, academics have poured over the disappearances—as many as 1,500 women and girls abducted, sexually assaulted, murdered, and dumped in the street or in the desert—with a bracing clinical remove. Sarah Schatz in her indispensable *Sexual Homicide of Women on the U.S./Mexican Border* coolly informs us, "Theorists argued that female maquila workers were killed in a disposable human resource of labor," a contention that "sparked empirical debate over the occupations of murdered women in Juárez." Such rhetoric may sound inhumane,

but researchers have shed valuable light on the underlying causes of the targeted sexual violence—everything from NAFTA to drug trafficking to machismo to poor urban planning—while at the same time demonstrating that structural, gender-based extreme violence is hardly unique to one Mexican border town.

But no amount of academic prose captures the nuanced, lived reality that Chicago playwright Isaac Gomez injects into his program note for Steppenwolf Theatre's premiere of *La Ruta*, his 90-minute drama centered on a handful of Juárez women in the late 1990s. Gomez, who grew up across the border in El Paso, writes about visiting family regularly in Juárez, where he felt as free and self-reliant as he did at home. "But," he writes, "any time any of the young women in my family wanted to or needed to do anything, like throw away the trash or go to the corner store down the street, the men would have to accompany them—myself included." This tiny reminiscence reifies a pervasive terror more successfully than any empirical argument I can fathom.

That sort of idiosyncratic specificity comes and goes in Gomez's play, making for an evening that ultimately packs half the wallop that it might. Gomez focuses on Marisela (Charin Alvarez) and Yolanda (Sandra Delgado), two 40-something women who've been recently let go from factory jobs in town. As the play opens, they're at the bus stop waiting for Yolanda's teenage daughter Brenda (Cher Álvarez), who's taken her mother's place on the factory floor. When Brenda doesn't get off her usual bus, Marisela works hard to reassure Yolanda that nothing is wrong—a difficult sell, considering that Marisela's own daughter went missing not long ago. But when Brenda fails to get off the last bus of the evening, Marisela calmly announces she's calling the police. It seems she's done this a thousand times before.

As he does throughout the play, Gomez adeptly captures subtle efforts to forge a sense of normalcy amid horror, as the women refuse to break from their comfortable routines until a miserable truth becomes inescapable. But as he also does throughout the play, Gomez

interjects a fair amount of inorganic, expositional dialogue. Yolanda, for example, explains at length what Marisela surely already knows: with the passage of NAFTA, factories popped up in Juárez, and now, "We finally have a shot [to] support our own families."

From the opening scene, Gomez jumps back and forth in time, tracking (and sometimes failing to track) the relationship between Brenda and her factory coworker Ivonne (Karen Rodriguez), who takes Brenda under her wing. Ivonne's sister has been abducted, so in Brenda Ivonne may be seeking a kind of replacement sibling—or she may be seeking something far more sinister. The fact that Ivonne has been tied to several factory women who have gone missing gives Brenda's mother little comfort.

It's a potent setup, but in scrambling the chronology of the scenes, Gomez struggles to maintain forward momentum. Rather than dramatizing the cumulative effects of pervasive violence in the women's lives, he presents a series of extended snapshots, often placed just before or just after consequential moments. More problematically, the larger social forces in Juárez remain frustratingly indistinct, for the most part reported rather than lived. This world rarely feels like a place where women need a male escort to take out the trash.

But Gomez, aided by director Sandra Marquez's careful eye, excels at depicting small domestic moments that convey disarming gravitas. For these women, perpetually potential targets of male violence, domesticity may be life-saving. The snapshots Gomez creates, enlivened by occasional choral songs, may not progress very far, but they hold enough intrigue, horror, and fortitude to make for a memorable evening. **A**

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ARTS & CULTURE



Fiddler on the Roof
© JOAN MARCUS

THEATER

RR Tradition!

The current tour of *Fiddler on the Roof* meets everybody's yeidel-deidel needs.

Your hands are tied with *Fiddler*. Everyone who comes to see it will want their yeidel-deidel needs met in a number of ways. The costumes, especially the women's, have to be pure threadbare shtetl-wear. The sets need to evoke a Chagall-like vision of mystical poverty in which everything is both grubby and luminous, in which the glow of ancestral origins beams through a thickly clouded dust, the hunger from whence Jews came.

Happily, this revival, which stops in Chicago for three weeks, doesn't disappoint in any of these respects. Even better, it also works legitimate stage wonders within nostalgia's constraints. The background ensemble of whirling yeshiva bochers, following Jerome Robbins's original choreography, are amazing, capturing all the rapture of orthodox dance with an almost unholy amount of sauce on top. Yehezkel Lazarov as Tevye nobly gives the audience all the chestal shimmying it could want, but manages to lend his performance the kind of overworked wheeze and stagger that one would actually expect from a run-down, persecuted milkman with a lame horse. This honesty about what being poor means is a strength of the production overall, but Jonathan von Mering takes that impulse too far as Lazar Wolf; watching him, I missed the jolly glint in Paul Mann's eye from the movie.

The best scene is an incredible, hallucinatory take on the Fruma-Sarah nightmare that is everything fans of traditional Hebrew demonology but also latex masks and corpses on stilts could hope for. —**MAX MALLER** *FIDDLER ON THE ROOF* Through 1/6/19: Wed 2 and 7:30 PM, Thu-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 2 and 8 PM, Sun 2 and 7:30 PM, Tue 7:30 PM; no performance Tue 12/25 or Sun 1/6, 7:30 PM, Cadillac Palace Theatre, 151 W. Randolph, 866-448-7849, broadwayinchicago.com, \$22-\$179.

RR Love will tear us apart

Quick + Dirty Productions arrives in Chicago with the brutal and hypnotic *Tender Napalm*.

Narrative opacity collides with emotional brutality in Philip Ridley's 2011 play, now making its local premiere with the new-to-Chicago Quick + Dirty Productions after a run in Portland, Oregon.

A man (David Lind) and a woman (Rebecca Ride-nour) trade tales of violence and domination—from rape-by-grenade to castration. Sometimes their stories involve fantastical sea creatures and monkeys. References to a birthday party, a young child (shades of George and Martha from *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*), and a tsunami all provide possible clues to the backstory that feeds the couple's Grand Guignol flights of fancy.

It's disturbing stuff, but Jen Rowe's hyper-intimate and spare staging makes us feel like we're trapped on the psychic desert island these two lovers share, where aching need and seething resentment sit cheek-to-jowl. Like the late Sarah Kane (to whom his work is often compared), Ridley's worldview seems bleak but not cynical. He's created characters who care enough to still fight for a foothold in each other's lives rather than succumb to numbing nihilism.

The material requires actors unafraid of physical and emotional exposure and who have the ability to hold just enough of the histrionics in check to keep us guessing about where they're going next. Matthew Kerrigan's movement segments, particularly a poignant and lyrical wordless epilogue, provide compelling physical counterpoint to the verbal battles and revelations. Sometimes it's tough to stomach, but Ride-nour and Lind don't flinch. As a result, *Tender Napalm* is both hypnotic and harrowing. —**KERRY REID** *TENDER NAPALM* Through 1/13/19: Thu-Sat 8 PM, Sun 5 PM. Nox Arca Theatre, 4001 N. Ravenswood, 559-970-9394, quickanddirty.art, \$25, \$20 seniors, \$15 students and industry.

BURNING BLUEBEARD

Through 12/31: Wed-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 3 and 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM, Mon 7 PM, Neo-Futurist Theater, 5153 N. Ashland, 773-878-4557, neofuturists.org, \$25-\$35.



© EVAN HANOVER

THEATER

The other great Chicago fire

Burning Bluebeard commemorates the Iroquois Theatre catastrophe with music, dancing, clowning, and acrobatics.

EVERYONE REMEMBERS the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, which burned through 17,500 buildings in three days. But who remembers the Iroquois Theatre Fire three decades later, which killed twice as many in a flash, efficiently roasting more than 600 theater patrons in a single afternoon, not even sparing the teenage ballerina dangling from a wire? If it's the lesser known fire for lack of songs, rest easy, because the Neo-Futurists and the Ruffians have it covered. *Burning Bluebeard*, written by Jay Torrence and directed by Halena Kays, returns for a seventh year to commemorate this gruesome disaster with music, dancing, clowning, and acrobatics.

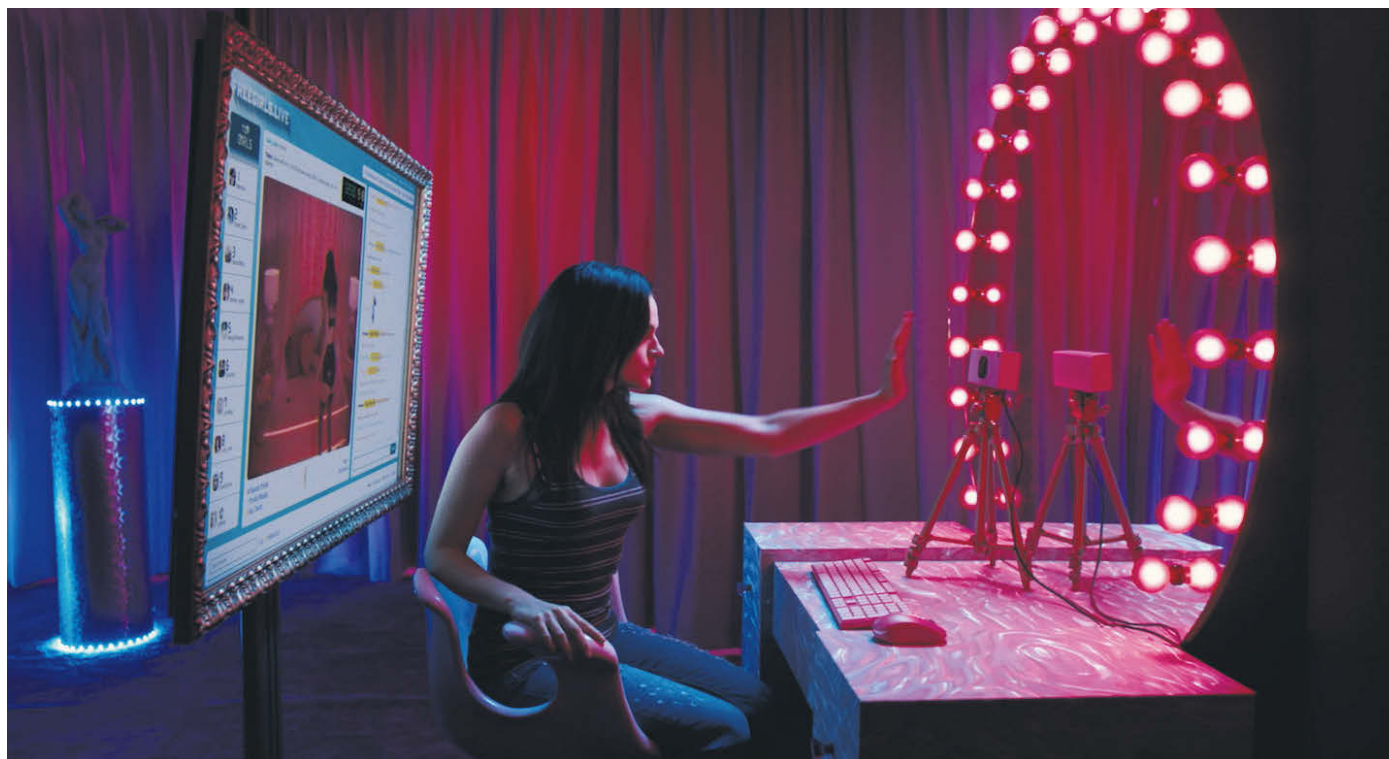
"I had written a play about a tragic circus train wreck for the Neo-Futurists, and I was intrigued by the idea of performers attempting to create something beautiful in the world and then the world coming and making a story out of them," says Torrence. Captivated by a "painfully lovely" image of Nellie Reed, the 13-year-old flower-tossing aerialist who died of her injuries, Torrence envisions the theater reanimated by the ghosts of the original performers. Like the heroine of the fairy-tale "Bluebeard," they are irresistibly drawn to the site of a tragedy—yet, he insists, with optimism: "My characters enter the Iroquois Theatre again. Every time they do, they're trying to get to a happy ending. We're hoping there's an ending where people don't die, but every night we have to tell the truth. Through that we try to find some semblance of hope."

—**IRENE HSIAO**

CAM ★★★

Directed by Daniel Goldhaber. TV-MA, 94 min. Streaming on Netflix.

ARTS & CULTURE



Cam

MOVIES

Stranger with my face

In *Cam*, the real horror is whorephobia.

By **CODY CORRALL**

Isa Mazzei, a former camgirl, was tired of films that depicted sex workers as disposable and unworthy of empathy. So she teamed up with director Daniel Goldhaber and modern horror juggernaut Blumhouse Productions to create *Cam*—a film that manages to be both a vibrant techno thriller that champions its sex-worker protagonist and an examination of the real-world consequences of doing sex work in a whorephobic society.

Cam follows Alice (Madeline Brewer), aka Lola, a camgirl trying to climb her way up the rankings of FreeGirlsLive.com by acting out extreme scenarios for shock value. Lola gets a following by threatening to slit her throat live—resulting in nonstop chat messages from worried fans and digital currency “tips”

from viewers doubting she has the guts to do it. Then she does—only to get back up, smile into the camera, and tear away the fake blood-covered prosthetic on her neck.

But just when it seems that Alice is getting on track with her life—she’s broken into the top 50 users, she has enough disposable income to buy herself a lavish \$4,000 couch—it all comes crumbling down when she gets locked out of her account and replaced by an exact replica of herself.

Alice no longer has access to her earnings or her clients—and she’s forced to watch like a voyeuristic masochist as her doppelgänger rises to fame. Lola Two uses a set that’s almost identical to Lola’s, and she, too, likes to raise the stakes. Alice starts tipping to see how far Lola Two will go. Lola Two pulls out a gun,

licks it teasingly, loads it, then puts it in her mouth and shoots herself—leaving her pink set covered in blood and brains and obliterating Alice’s sanity. And then Lola Two pops back up with a sickly smile and celebrates that she’s just broken into the top 20 girls on FreeGirlsLive.

While Lola Two is framed as Alice’s nemesis, she is far from the film’s villain. At every turn, Alice’s concerns aren’t taken seriously because she’s a sex worker. The tech support worker from FreeGirlsLive doesn’t believe Alice was hacked—even when she’s on the phone with him while Lola Two is streaming live. Alice’s mother says she doesn’t care that Alice is a sex worker—but she never actually listens when Alice tries to explain what’s gone wrong. When Alice calls the police, the officers

write off her allegations of identity theft as unimportant and instead ask invasive and irrelevant questions about her work.

The only way Alice can regain her autonomy is to fight for it herself. None of the people in her life, not even those sworn to protect her, are willing to step in and help because they view her as “less than.” But she isn’t less than because she’s a sex worker, and she knows it, as do the filmmakers. She’s a fully fledged character with aspirations and motivations that just happen to revolve around a profession that is regularly scorned, criminalized, and embedded in an institutionalized system of violence that often results in death.

Cam is a film that does not rely solely on its ideologies. It is a horror film first and foremost—one that is just as torturous to sit through as it is aesthetically appealing, with the majority of the shots drenched in neon light. The audience is forced to watch Lola Two along with Alice—unsure of how far Lola Two will go or how much Alice can stand, but unable to look away because the online performance is so dazzling. *Cam* is a fresh addition to an already great year for women in horror—from *Revenge* to *Hereditary* to *Suspiria* to *Annihilation* and *Halloween*.

Horror, at its best, reconstructs the formula of the genre and reflects what frightens us in a particular moment. Simply put, *Cam* is about the terror of getting locked out of your online accounts and losing your manufactured identity. By making a sex worker its protagonist, *Cam* is able to turn some of the most tired horror tropes—like the demonization of non-virgins or the brutal treatment of women for shock value—on their heads. It’s a film that challenges the politics of the genre while still embodying what makes horror great by channeling our collective fear of losing ourselves online. **A**

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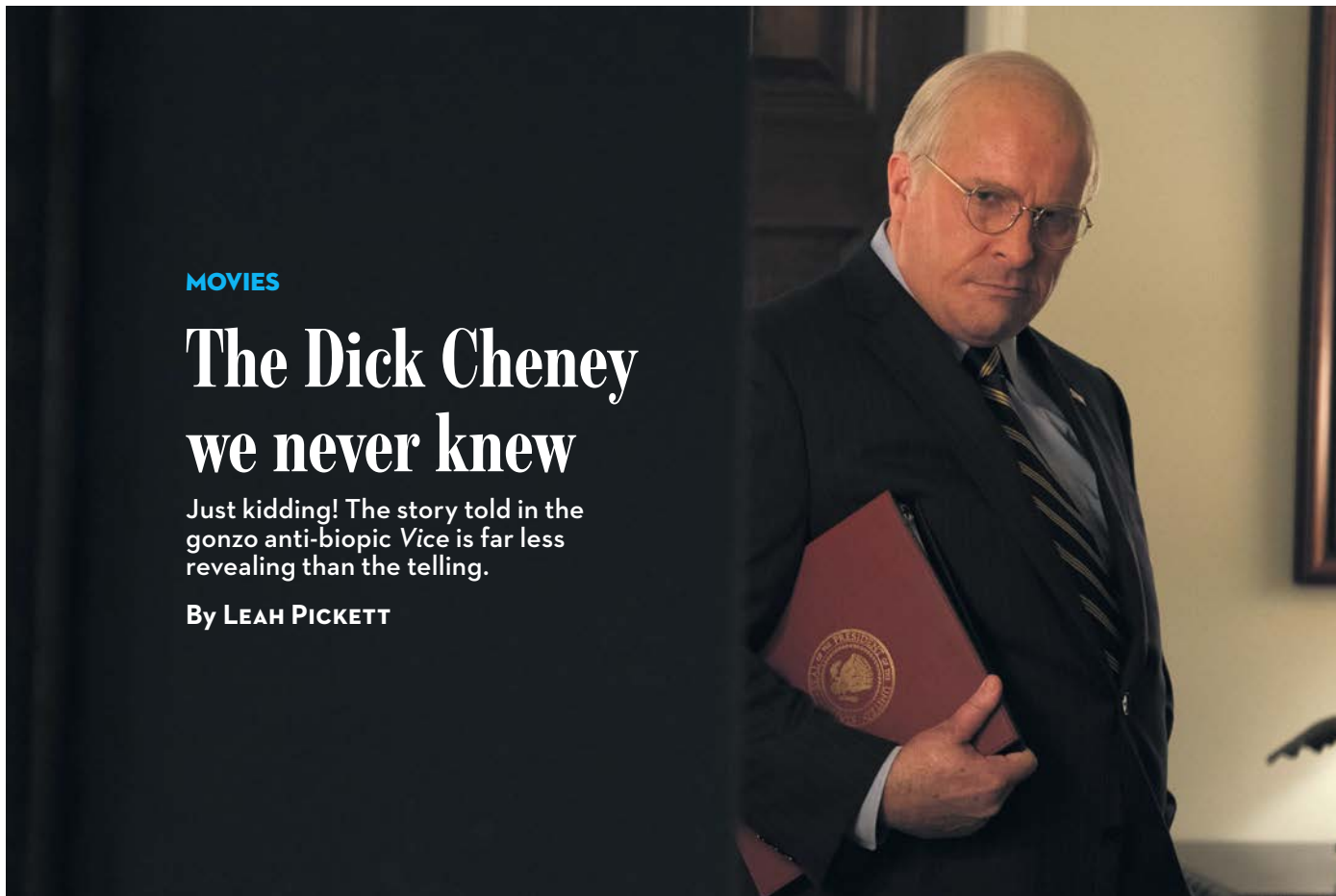
★★★★ EXCELLENT ★★★ GOOD ★★ AVERAGE ★ POOR ● WORTHLESS

MOVIES

The Dick Cheney we never knew

Just kidding! The story told in the gonzo anti-biopic *Vice* is far less revealing than the telling.

By LEAH PICKETT



Vice

Writer-director Adam McKay's passel of broad comedies and more recent sociopolitical satires have three interesting attributes in common. The first is a focus on wayward American men, fictional and actual, and a hankering to dissect them and flesh out their trajectories. The second is iconoclasm, evident in the zeal with which McKay's films explode popular institutions and ideologies, ranging from NASCAR to the nuclear family to trickle-down economics. The third is provocation, by which the viewer is poked enough to feel considered, challenged, and perhaps even culpable for the on-screen action.

These motivational strands plait in *Vice*: a gonzo anti-biopic that limns Dick Cheney's rise from alcoholic Yale dropout to cunning Washington insider to shadow president—whoops, vice president—alongside George W. Bush. Like *The Big Short*, McKay's 2015 take on

the 2008 financial crisis, *Vice* is an involving satire, in no small part because McKay positions the viewer as a participant. Characters talk to you; constant shifts in narrative style and tone snap you to attention. You cannot simply sit and absorb this movie. Love it or hate it, you are one of its characters.

But first, you meet Cheney (Christian Bale) as a drunk 22-year-old in his home state of Wyoming. His high school sweetheart, Lynne (Amy Adams), slaps him with an ultimatum: either shape up or she moves on. Out of love and devotion, Cheney rises to embody Lynne's idea of a great man. By 1969, Cheney is a congressional intern, working in the White House under Donald Rumsfeld (Steve Carell). In short time, Cheney succeeds Rumsfeld as White House chief of staff under President Gerald Ford (Bill Camp).

The reasons for Cheney's ascent, according to a mysterious narrator (Jesse Plemons), are simple. Cheney is quiet, he does as he is told,

and he is loyal. When he asks Rumsfeld, his mentor, "What do we believe?" as conservatives, Rumsfeld laughs maniacally and slams the door in his face. Lesson learned.

Vice prioritizes the telling of this origin story, as well as the juicy years immediately preceding and following 9/11, while skimming the periods in between: most notably, Cheney's tenure as secretary of defense under President George H.W. Bush and his activities as CEO of the oil-field services company Halliburton. But McKay gets his point. Cheney develops a taste for power and influence. He becomes an expert at wielding power because, as the film suggests, he's an expert at reading people and giving them exactly what they think they want. For example, Cheney reads George W. Bush (Sam Rockwell) as a wayward son who longs to impress his father, and thus he manipulates W. into invading Iraq to finish a job H.W. started. These are broad strokes, to be sure, but McKay's protean, faux-docu-

mentary style allows for such heady shortcuts to gnaw at an essential truth: that power run amok is a dangerous beast.

Countless signals remind the viewer that they are not just watching the movie but are a part of it. Halfway through the film, the credits roll, but we know McKay's bluffing. The movie kicks up again with the Cheneys discussing their takeover of Washington—nay, the world!—in Shakespearean verse. Celebrity cameos, breaks in the fourth wall, and other winking departures from reality keep us on our toes. Animal imagery, of slippery fish for Cheney to catch and of hyenas that represent disorder, appeal to our viscera. References to *American Idol* and *Survivor* collide with footage of torture and bombings. McKay knows what he's doing, and he knows that we know what he's doing. The contract between director and viewer is rarely so explicit or so invigorating.

McKay could have made a serious movie about serious issues, or a silly movie that dispensed with seriousness altogether. Instead, he lands somewhere in the middle, and succeeds, at the very least, in delivering a provocative indictment of one wayward American man's wielding of power. Whether or not the viewer agrees with the film's message—that Cheney is a fascinating and dichotomous figure, a man who loves his wife and children and executes atrocities—is beside the point. You're interested, aren't you? You felt something, didn't you?

If McKay's goal with *Vice* was to rouse viewers to interrogate their superiors and themselves—what they believe versus what they know—well, he succeeded. Attention earned. 

 @leahkpickett

WELCOME TO MARWEN ★★
Directed by Robert Zemeckis. PG-13, 116 min.
In wide release.

ARTS & CULTURE



Welcome to Marwen

MOVIES

Such an inspiration!

In *Welcome to Marwen* the hero's disability is a way to let us feel good about ourselves.

By **BRANDON SWARD**

Based on a true story, *Welcome to Marwen* starts where the life of Mark Hogancamp (Steve Carell) nearly ended, or rather where it began again. On April 8, 2000, outside a bar in upstate New York, five men attacked a drunk Hogancamp after they learned of his penchant for wearing women's shoes and left him for dead. Now, several years later, Hogancamp has lost all memories of his past life due to the resultant brain damage and is racked by chronic pain. Once a gifted illustrator, his motor skills have deteriorated so severely he can't hold a pencil. After Medicaid stopped paying for his rehabilitative therapy, Hogancamp began to construct an elaborate WWII-era Belgian city he christens "Marwen" that is fully developed by the time the movie begins. Full of

Nazis, beautiful women, and a blue-haired witch (Diane Kruger), this miniature world, it quickly becomes clear, is a theater of the mind where Hogancamp endlessly reenacts the attack and its aftermath in an attempt to come to terms with it.

At the outset of the film, Hogancamp seems to have mostly recovered, though he constantly blames his alcoholism for the attack. He has relearned how to walk and goes to work, talks to the townspeople, and photographs his dolls. But soon we get hints of the incredible amount of stress he's under. His phone rings off the hook with calls from his lawyer reminding him of the sentencing hearing for his attackers at which he's slated to testify. Although surrounded by a supportive and accommodating community, small events send

him into a PTSD-like shock: a Nazi doll, a TV turned up too loud, a whistling kettle. At the same time, Hogancamp has an exhibition of his post-attack photographs upcoming at a blue-chip gallery in New York City, which his friends pressure him to attend. The line between reality and dreams begins to fray as Hogancamp introduces a doll version of his new neighbor Nicol (Leslie Mann) into Marwen after meeting her. As their friendship progresses, Mark proposes to her in real life and Nicol's confused discomfort poignantly illustrates how what started as a coping mechanism for Hogancamp has come to take on a life of its own.

In the end, Hogancamp is finally able to confront his attackers, attend his gallery show, and shift his affection from the clearly uninterested Nicol to the clearly interested ➔

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ARTS & CULTURE

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Roberta (Merritt Wever). Just before the credits, the film shows us a photo of the real Hogancamp, along with the information that to this day he has refrained from drinking alcohol, that he continues to make art, and that Marwen now has over 200 inhabitants. Despite its many “truth is stranger than fiction” qualities, *Welcome to Marwen* follows a quite conventional narrative: The hero is confronted with an obstacle, which he (it’s usually a “he”) valiantly overcomes to prove his mettle.

All of this is overlaid, however, with Hogancamp’s profound emotional and physical dis-

abilities. The character’s eventual success is all the more triumphant as the film goes to great lengths to demonstrate just how debilitating Hogancamp’s condition is. In this way, *Welcome to Marwen* falls into well-worn tropes in which disabled bodies are called upon to provide audience catharsis. In her TEDx talk, “I’m not your inspiration, thank you very much,” the late Stella Young relates an experience from when she was teaching, and a student interrupted to ask her when she was going to do her “motivational speaking.” In that moment, Young realized, “For lots of us, disabled people are not our teachers or our doctors or our manicurists. We’re not real people. We are there to inspire.” Young describes these uses of people with disabilities as “pornographic,” as they “objectify one group of people for the benefit of another group of people.” For her, “the purpose of these images is to inspire you, to motivate you, so that we can look at them and think, ‘Well, however bad my life is, it could be worse. I could be that person.’”

Young ends her talk by sharing her hope for “a world where we don’t have such low expectations of disabled people that we are congratulated for getting out of bed and remembering our own names in the morning.” By giving us a main character who does quite a bit more than get out of bed and remember his own name in the morning, *Welcome to Marwen* certainly breaks away from some of the features of “inspiration porn” Young identifies.

But perhaps this step forward is accompanied by at least one step back. It’s no coincidence that the studio, Universal, chose to re-

lease the film so close to Christmas, as it fully fits the mold of the “heartwarming holiday movie.” The winter holidays are traditionally at once about feeling good and remembering the less fortunate (think *A Christmas Carol*, *It’s a Wonderful Life*, *It Happened on Fifth Avenue*, etc.). The film ends with Hogancamp striding down the street in high heels, dragging a toy car full of dolls behind him, the very picture of queer self-acceptance.

But much of the film also peers through the concerned, indulgent eyes of the women who surround Hogancamp, both in Marwen and in real-world Kingston, New York. These are the eyes *Welcome to Marwen* offers us. While *Welcome to Marwen* certainly wouldn’t pass the Bechdel test, this isn’t the most worrisome problem vis-à-vis gender in the film. We learn that Hogancamp collects women’s shoes (itself a perfectly acceptable hobby), which he refers to as a “woman’s essence” (at best creepy, at worst misogynist). Nevertheless, Hogancamp is portrayed as more pathetic than threatening, especially when contrasted with Nicol’s rough, motorcycle-boot-clad ex-boyfriend Kurt (Neil Jackson). The female characters in *Welcome to Marwen* are all a little too yielding, a little too understanding. They exist to make Hogancamp feel good, they treat him as fragile. In this way they are like those Young faults—they expect so little of Hogancamp that it’s all too easy for him to impress them, and all too easy for us to feel good about ourselves in the process. 

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MOVIES

RR Bathtubs Over Broadway

Before David Letterman's rise to mainstream TV megastardom, his humor appealed largely to nerds and geeks, obsessives and completionists who yearned to be hip, even if they were still ambivalent about that urge. Dave was known for his loyalty to his staff, and here he rewards one of his longest-serving writers, Steve Young, by acting as executive producer and interviewee for this delightfully oddball documentary about Young's fixation on arcane industrial musicals from the 60s, 70s, and 80s, lavish extravaganzas funded by corporations as educational incentives for their salesmen and staged at private company functions. What started as a production duty-finding obscure LPs for a recurring *Late Night* bit about Dave's record collection—became a mission for Young as he grew fascinated by these shows written by such Broadway teams as Sheldon Harnick and Jerry Bock (*Fiddler on the Roof*) and John Kander and Fred Ebb (*Cabaret*) that sang the praises of bathroom fixtures, cars, fast food, and polyester, sometimes to the tune of \$3 million a pop. It makes you ponder, from the standpoint of cultural anthropology, the differences between then and now, with conglomerates today hell-bent on enriching shareholders by decimating workforces. The film includes Young's own career crossroads, when Letterman retires from CBS and Young plans what's next after a 25-year stint crafting jokes. Dava Whisenant (also a former Letterman staffer) directs this chronicle of a comedy writer's second act, his embrace of a profound new passion, and the unexpected friends he's made along the way. —**ANDREA GRONYALL** PG-13, 87 min. Fri 1/4/19–Thu 1/10. Music Box Theatre

Bumblebee

Michael Bay's *Transformers* movies are edited so furiously that one can disregard the plots and appreciate them on the level of abstract formalism; by contrast, this prequel to the series (directed by Travis Knight) employs longer takes and more traditional montage, which allows you to really bask in how stupid the story is. Set in 1987, it follows an 18-year-old aspiring mechanic (Hailee Steinfeld) who befriends a nice giant robot from outer space. Their friendship gets interrupted by the arrival of some evil robots who want to destroy the nice robot. The film presents late-80s America so fetishistically that it feels at times like a follow-up to Bennett Miller's *Foxcatcher* (2014), and its recycling of 80s teen-movie clichés are also weirdly reverential. Perhaps the best thing about it is that the heroine is a headstrong young woman who refuses to be objectified—likely a corrective to the rampant sexism of Bay's films. —**BEN SACHS** 2018 PG-13, 113 min. In wide release

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RR The Charmer

I enjoyed this Danish-Swedish coproduction as a contemporary update of the sort of story most associated with Honoré de Balzac—i.e., one that scrutinizes the workings of sex and power as a means of commenting on larger social structures. The antihero, Esmail (Ardalan Esmaili), is an Iranian living in Copenhagen whose work visa is about to expire; he plots to remain in the country by seducing a Danish woman into letting him cohabitate with her. The desperate Esmail essentially makes a commodity of his charm, fully aware that that's what he's doing; cowriter-director Milad Alami considers the character's guilt as well as his seductive skill, resulting in a multifaceted portrait. Alami's directorial style is in line with the subtle yet suspenseful realism reminiscent of such contemporary Iranian filmmakers as Asghar Farhadi (*A Separation*, *The Salesman*) and Majid Barzegar (*Parviz*, *A Very Ordinary Citizen*), and this has the interesting effect of rendering the Danish settings strange. In subtitled Danish and Farsi. —**BEN SACHS** 101 min. Fri 1/4/19, 4 and 8:15 PM; Sat 1/5, 8 PM; Sun 1/6, 3 PM; Tue 1/8, 8:15 PM; Wed 1/9, 6 PM; and Thu 1/10, 8 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

RR Divide and Conquer: The Story of Roger Ailes

As founder and longtime CEO of Fox News, Roger Ailes may have done more than anyone else to foster the angry political divide now hobbling America; his cultural influence was so profound that his decades-long sexual

harassment of female employees, which led to his ouster from Fox in 2016, seems almost to belong in a separate documentary. Yet director Alexis Bloom reaches back far enough into Ailes's unhappy youth in small-town Ohio to explain both his deep understanding of the heartland and his ruthless abuse of those in his professional orbit. A hemophiliac, Ailes lived his whole life in fear of bleeding to death, and as more than one witness observes, he developed a dark talent for exploiting viewers' worst fears, even as he bullied and intimidated his colleagues and underlings. Above all, Ailes was a showbiz genius, though ironically his own downfall became just another titillating scandal in the 24-hour news cycle. —**J.R. JONES** 107 min. Fri 1/4/19, 2 and 6 PM; Sat 1/5, 7:45 PM; Sun 1/6, 3 PM; Mon 1/7, 7:45 PM; Tue 1/8, 6 PM; Wed 1/9, 8 PM; and Thu 1/10, 8 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

RR If Beale Street Could Talk

Set in 1974, when New York City verged on bankruptcy and its neighborhoods were unraveling, director Barry Jenkins's luminous adaptation of James Baldwin's novel finds beauty and hope amid the decay and desperation in Harlem and Greenwich Village. This tender, lushly romantic drama follows Tish and Fonny (KiKi Layne and Stephan James), childhood friends who grow into adult soul mates but who are sundered after they conceive a baby and a racist white cop frames Fonny for rape. Standouts among the supporting cast include Regina King as Tish's staunchly protective mother, and Brian Tyree Henry as Fonny's friend, holloed out by his own recent two-year prison term on a trumped-up charge. James Laxton's cinematography is even more richly hued than his work on Jenkins's *Moonlight*, and the sound design and Nicholas Britell's score add to the movie's brimming sensory pleasures. With Colman Domingo, Michael Beach, Diego Luna, Pedro Pascal, and Emily Rios. —**ANDREA GRONYALL** R, 119 min. In wide release

RR Liyana

Amanda and Aaron Kopp shot this inventive and compassionate documentary at an orphanage in Swaziland, showing how the South African children's author Gcina Mhlophe gets several orphans to work through their traumas by creating a story together. The Kopps illustrate the children's tale with animated drawings by Kenneth Shofela Coker, and the animation, especially when coupled with the children's improvised narration, is affecting—even borderline-adorable. Yet the theme of trauma lingers well after this short movie ends; the children's story touches on alcoholism, losing a family, and near death from starvation, making one wonder what horrors these children experienced. The Kopps don't divulge what the young storytellers went through before arriving at the orphanage, but rather focus on the kids' creativity and social skills. Like Abbas Kiarostami's documentary *ABC Africa* (2001), the result is an unexpectedly joyous film about heavy subjects. —**BEN SACHS** 77 min. Fri 12/28, 2 and 6 PM; Sat 12/29, 3 PM; Sun 12/30, 5:30 PM; Wed 1/2, 8:30 PM; and Thu 1/3, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

RR Mary Poppins Returns

Sometimes it feels like we're lost in a world so focused on intelligence and logic that we've forgotten childhood magic and wonder. But, as Mary Poppins

reminds us, "nothing's gone forever, only out of place" and we're never too old to give in to imagination. *Mary Poppins Returns*, the sequel to the much loved 1964 musical film *Mary Poppins*, is as wonderful as the original, telling a new story with equally important lessons about family, love, and hope. Twenty-five years after the original, Michael Banks (Ben Whishaw), is all grown up and a father of three who is struggling to support his family after his wife's passing when Fidelity Fiduciary Bank (one and the same from the original film) threatens to repossess his home. Mary Poppins (Emily Blunt) returns to save the day, and with the help of Jack (Lin-Manuel Miranda), a London lamplighter and former apprentice to chimney sweep Bert, shows Michael, his children, and his sister Jane (Emily Mortimer) how a little imagination can go a long way to change their point of view and, as a result, everything else around them. *Mary Poppins Returns* brings back many beloved elements from the original film, including the musical sequences with paintings that come to life, Michael and Jane's old kite (whose magic is at the heart of the film's story), and Mary Poppins's flying, talking umbrella. The film also features cameo appearances from stars like Meryl Streep (as Mary Poppins's eccentric cousin Topsy), Colin Firth (as the villainous bank president, Mr. Wilkins), and Dick Van Dyke (not as Bert, but as the honorable bank chairman, Mr. Dawes Jr.). —**DANIELLE GENSBURG** PG, 130 min. In wide release

On the Basis of Sex

Felicity Jones plays Ruth Bader Ginsburg from her mid-20s to her early 40s in this glossy, hackneyed biopic. Daniel Stiepleman's script reduces everyone to a progressive-minded hero or a reactionary villain, and those who display any moral ambiguity eventually come around to the right side; for her part, director Mimi Leder (whose previous credits include the notoriously mawkish *Pay It Forward* and lots of series television) delivers this in the fashion of Steven Spielberg at his sentimental, self-righteous worst. At least Leder has the good sense also to rip off Spielberg at his best: after a prologue depicting Ginsburg's experience at Harvard Law School in the mid-1950s, the film concentrates on a relatively short, but momentous period in the subject's life: a la *Lincoln* (2012). The tight focus makes for an engaging, fast-moving legal drama; as with Spielberg at both his best and worst, this is seldom boring. With Armie Hammer, Justin Theroux, and Kathy Bates. —**BEN SACHS** PG-13, 120 min. In wide release

RR They Shall Not Grow Old

The title is a misnomer: Peter Jackson's documentary about the British soldiers of World War I is narrated by old men, veterans who were recorded by the BBC and the Imperial War Museums in the 1960s and '70s. Collectively they tell the story of their war, from enlistment and basic training to the trenches in France to their return home in 1918; it is, by turns, funny, gross, terrifying, and heartbreaking. There's neither glory nor heroism; after just a short time on the western front, most of them no longer remembered what they were supposed to be fighting for. One million of them died—just from the British army. The narration is accompanied by archival photos and film footage from the IWM, restored and colorized by Jackson and his crew and projected in 3D. This sometimes gives the visuals an artificial Madame Tussaud's effect, but at their best, this is as close as we can get to a full immersion into one of the most horrifying and ultimately pointless wars in modern history. —**AIMEE LEVITT** R, 99 min. Thu 12/27, 1 PM. City North Stadium 14 and Webster Place 11



Dear Citizens of Chicago,

We are CIVL: the Chicago Independent Venue League. We are the owners of fourteen independent venues and our membership is growing. We are longtime friends (and yes, often competitors) who formed an alliance when Sterling Bay and Live Nation announced a massive entertainment complex within the proposed Lincoln Yards development, with multiple live music venues to be owned and operated exclusively by Live Nation. These venues are to mirror the sizes of our city's existing clubs, with capacities ranging from 100 to 5,000, as well as a 20,000 seat stadium.

We are not against competition — CIVL members have been competing with one another for decades — but we can't stand idly by while someone stacks the deck against us. Mega-corporations like Live Nation create vertical monopolies within a market, and when this happens, they own the venues, control the festivals, operate the ticketing platform, manage the artists and decide where they perform. **Because of this, they are able to withstand major losses while driving out the competition. This is what we are facing in Lincoln Yards.**

The Chicago music community is known the world over for our fierce independence and commitment to our community. From artists to venues to fans, our scene is deeply rooted in our city. Venues are also major economic drivers in our neighborhoods. When people go to a show, they eat, drink, and shop in the surrounding area.

Our clubs have history and character, and are often a voice for our communities. We employ hundreds of Chicagoans. We know our neighbors on a first name basis. We are deeply connected to local artists. And as Chicagoans, we will not go down without a fight.

Most American cities don't enjoy what we have here. In places like San Francisco and Nashville, smaller, independent venues are struggling to compete in a marketplace driven by vertically integrated companies that control venues, promotions, ticketing and artist management.

Some cities are stepping up to explore how they can support their independent music communities. Seattle, Denver, DC, Toronto and Vancouver come to mind. Beyond simply valuing what we already have, Chicago must join this global movement in order to preserve our musical past, present and future.

Sterling Bay wants Chicago taxpayers to provide \$800 million in TIF funding to pay for the infrastructure for their Lincoln Yards project. We understand that public/private partnerships are necessary for our city to move forward. But is this the best use of our tax dollars? Is Live Nation a good partner for the city as a whole? Is the collateral damage to Chicago's historic music scene worth it? We say no.

Let us instead preserve, protect, and build upon Chicago's musical legacy. One step we can take towards this goal is to delay the TIF. A thorough and deliberate process is needed to ensure that our tax dollars are being spent wisely and communities such as ours, don't suffer.

We are not opposed to responsible development that is done with community input. We are simply asking the city to slow down and do the proper vetting necessary for a project of this size. Delay the TIF until the next mayor and city council take office.

WE CAN STOP THIS

Please help us. Contact your Alderman and tell them to delay the TIF. Visit our website and sign our petition: CIVLchicago.com

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G-Man Tavern	Sleeping Village
The Hideout	SmartBar
Lincoln Hall	Subterranean
Martyrs	Thalia Hall
Metro	The Whistler



PICK OF THE WEEK

Ryley Walker covers a lost Dave Matthews Band record with unexpected beauty and weirdness

RYLEY WALKER, OHMME, BEN LAMAR GAY

Fri 12/28, 9 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, \$18, \$15 in advance. 21+

EVAN JENKINS

A FEW YEARS AGO it became socially acceptable for punks and freaks—the types of people who'd spent their entire lives raging against hippies and wooks—to get into the Grateful Dead. I'm guilty of that myself, and with the Dead acting as my gateway drug, I've become aware that more and more local weirdos are opening their minds to other alumni of the jam-band circuit as well. Any time listeners start exploring different genres, that sort of progression is inevitable, but there's one act among these groups that's been picking up way more newfound appreciation than I'd expect: Dave Matthews Band, the musical equivalent of a pair of beige cargo shorts. Earlier this year—after the Bob Weir and Phil Lesh show at the Chicago Theatre, of all places—I ran into Doug Kaplan, who helps run Chicago avant-garde label Hausu Mountain. He described DMB to me as “sick,” further explaining that they essentially sound like “Dream Theater around a campfire.” Another person riding the Dave train these days is experimental-pop-jazz-folk singer and

guitarist Ryley Walker, who decided to undertake the bizarre task of covering the entirety of Dave Matthews Band's *The Lillywhite Sessions*—a shelved but widely bootlegged 2001 full-length recorded with producer Steve Lillywhite. On paper it's a hard sell; the last thing I want to do with my time is sit down with 74 minutes of Dave Matthews material. But unsurprisingly, Walker—with backing from drummer Ryan Jewell, bassist Andrew Scott Young, and saxophonist Nick Mazzarella—makes the album completely his own. Outside of a couple of slightly too-funky sax parts, *The Lillywhite Sessions* (Dead Oceans) shows few signs of Matthews at all; if you didn't come in knowing these were covers, you might think they were Walker originals. From the raw material, he builds upon the sort of beautiful, cerebral, pastoral prog-jazz and heady drones he utilized on his mind-bending May release, *Deafman Glance*. Don't let the stink of Dave put you off—*The Lillywhite Sessions* is another huge win for Walker in 2018. —**LUCA CIMARUSTI**

THURSDAY 27

DKV TRIO See also Friday, 9 PM, Elastic, 3429 W. Diversey, \$20. **ALL**

Drummer Hamid Drake, bassist Kent Kessler, and saxophonist and clarinetist Ken Vandermark have been playing together as DKV Trio since 1994. During their early years, their forceful playing—forged and focused by frequent gigging and their ability to improvise cohesive, songlike structures—made them one of the most exciting live acts of any genre to grace a Chicago stage. But by the early 2000s, the overseas obligations of each member had multiplied, and they scaled back group performances to the point that each gig felt like a return to the status quo, rather than an opportunity to further develop their sound. In recognition of this, DKV Trio added tours of Europe and collaborative efforts with multi-instrumentalist Joe McPhee and Scandinavian garage-jazz trio the Thing to their calendar, alongside their annual year-end concerts in Chicago and Milwaukee. These redoubled efforts pay off on their most recent album, *Latitude 41.88* (Not Two). Not only can DKV Trio instantly compose music that's so memorable you'd swear you were remembering deep cuts from an old favorite album, but each man's growth as an instrumentalist heightens the lyricism and soul of their tunes as well as the lucid rigor of their abstract passages. —**BILL MEYER**

LANDO CHILL, VIC SPENCER *Lando Chill* headlines; *Vic Spencer and Ajani Jones* open. 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, \$10. 21+

“[I'm] just the Burt Bacharach of the shit,” **Lando Chill** muses on “Clypped,” off his latest album, *Black Ego*. Like most lyrics from the Tucson rapper, the boast first comes across as a woozy offhand joke, but the more you think about it, the deeper it seems to get. The album's laid-back, loungey trip-hop vibe comes courtesy of producer the Lasso (aka Andy Catlin), and Chill's rhymes wrap around the meaning of his words with an easy, intricate sophistication that would make Bacharach lyricist Hal David envious. On “Facts,” the Lasso lays down a deep stoned beat leavened with what sounds like a jazz vibraphone sample, while Chill slides back and forth between weird double entendres and acerbic ➔



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JANUARY 8	FLABBY HOFFMAN SHOW 8PM
JANUARY 9	ELIZABETH'S CRAZY LITTLE THING
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JANUARY 10	FLABBY HOFFMAN SHOW 8PM
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MUSIC



Lando Chill
 © NICK GRAYSON

continued from 29
 political commentary: "Ol' earth know it's hurt / Like pussy we pound it / Break it, buy it / Tell it that it need to diet / What this nation really needs is a pussy riot." Chill is the kind of rapper who can rhyme the French cartoon character Caillou with the Japanese monster genre *kaiju* on one song ("Clypped") and then call out police brutality on the next ("Peso"). His flow feels slow, but his sharp tongue shows he's got a lot on his mind. Like many of the best songwriters, Chill makes everything he does look easy while inviting his listeners to laugh, think, and groove all at once. —**NOAH BERLATSKY**
 The world may never catch up to Chicago rapper **Vic Spencer**—not that he seems to mind. He's been prolific and fierce on the mike throughout 2018, starting with January's *Spencer for Higher*, a collaboration with UK producer SonnyJim. Since then, he's dropped three solo albums: June's *Duffle of Gems*, August's *A Smile Killed My Demons* (which you could only get by sending Spencer \$20 via PayPal), and November's compact *Stupid*, which he released on the Backcourt label. On *Stupid*, Spencer raps as if he's competing with himself—throughout his tough-as-nails performances and vital verses, he delivers lines that could either draw a chuckle or land like a punch in the gut. Though Spencer's flow is distinct to the degree that I can anticipate when he might pause to take a breath between lines, I can never predict where he'll take a song; he finds new nuance and life in the themes he's been rapping about for years—even when he rags on

other rappers or talks about living in group homes, he provides texture that makes his songs multi-dimensional. And he always says something about Chicago—and specifically the places around the city where we've both been—that helps me see things with a fresh perspective, such as when he raps about drinking and writing songs at Tonic Room on "Monster Bride." —**LEOR GALIL**

FRIDAY28

BUK & DAWRECK 10 PM, Subterranean, 2011 W. North, \$15. 21+

Over the past year or so I've noticed a handful of Chicago hip-hop veterans gravitating back to releasing music on physical media after long stints of focusing on digital platforms (whether free-download mixtape sites or major players such as Spotify and Apple). Perhaps they're following the example of DJ and Black Pegasus label head Mark Davis. Since starting the company in 2010, he's completely avoided digital releases, and he'd become known for reissuing obscure local rap recordings on vinyl well before this spring's launch of the new seven-inch series *Seven Sense*; he kicked things off with a couple of previously unissued early Common recordings. For the most part, this new surge of physical releases has focused on archival material or reissues—such as the vinyl repressing of the

MUSIC

long-out-of-print debut from Chicago rap group Tha Chamba, *Makin Illa Noize*, from Belgian label Taha. However, *Scattered Bodies*, aka west-side rap heroes Buk (of Psychodrama) and DaWreck (of Triple Darkness), dropped their recent self-titled debut in two formats they've described as "collectible editions." They're selling their run of 300 CDs and 30 cassettes for \$35 a pop online; both versions come with trading cards and a poster (Reader contributor Steve Krakow did the artwork). I imagine that the limited supply has encouraged Chicago hip-hop evangelists to pony up (I sure did), but I do wish *Scattered Bodies* were available to more listeners. Limited releases can ensure that music receives attention from those most likely to appreciate it, rather than risk getting lost in the algorithmic abyss of Spotify (though two singles are available through the streaming giant). But I imagine that somewhere out there are young rap fanatics with no sense of the history of Chicago's west-side scene who'd nonetheless go bonkers over the interplay between Buk's sturdy flow and DaWreck's off-the-chain rapping on "Trumpets." At tonight's release party for *Scattered Bodies*' debut, you can hear these songs live for less than half what the album costs—though I can't promise you won't want to turn right around and buy it. —LEOR GALIL

DKV TRIO See Thursday. 9 PM, Elastic, 3429 W. Diversey, \$20. 

RYLEY WALKER See *Pick of the Week*, page 29. *Ohmme and Ben LaMar Gay* open. 9 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, \$18, \$15 in advance. 21+

INSPECTOR OWL *Troubled Hubble and Fckr Jr.* open. 8 PM, Schubas, 3159 N. Southport, \$10. 18+

Perhaps when the retro gaze of pop-music culture shifts to aughties indie rock, some future archivists will give Inspector Owl a little more attention than they've received in their time. The five-piece group hail from the western suburb of Geneva, and over their 15 years together, their activity has become more sporadic; they've released one single every year for the past three, but it's clear the band's members have had other priorities. Last month Inspector Owl announced their impending final show on Facebook: "Life has taken everyone in different directions and we are scattered across multiple states and thousands of miles. We want to spend the evening with as many friends and family as possible." So why not join them for the celebration? Inspector Owl's most recent album, a ➔

»»»»»»»»»» 2018/2019 ««««««««««

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 12/28 Bruce In The USA
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 1/4 KICK - The INXS Experience
 1/5 Trippin Billies w/ Dan Hubbard Band
 1/11 97.1 FM The Drive Presents Led Zeppelin 2 Jimmy Page 75th Birthday Celebration
 1/12 97.1 FM The Drive Presents
 50th Anniversary of Led Zeppelin II played by Led Zeppelin 2
 1/18 G. Love & Special Sauce 1/19 Infected Mushroom 1/26 Super Diamond
 1/29 Jesse McCartney 2/5 Tesla 2/6 Tesla
 2/7 95 WIL Rock Presents Pop Evil w/ Don Jamieson & Them Evils
 2/8 Poppy - Am I A Girl Tour w/ Kailee Morgue 2/9 Sixteen Candles
 2/11 Candlebox 2/15, 2/16 & 2/17 STS9 2/18 Travis Green & Mosaic MSC
 2/23 Chippendales 2/24 One OK Rock w/ Waterparks & Stand Atlantic
 2/26 95 WIL Rock Presents Sevendust w/ Tremonti, Cane Hill, Lullwater & Kirra
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13

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THE PROMONTORY

DEC
22



POCKET SCIENCE
SUPERGROUP

DEC
27



THE SET PRESENTS
DONNIE

DEC
30



WE LOVE SOUL PRE-NYE
CELEBRATION

DEC
31



ELEVATED NYE
2019

JAN
4



KID CAPRI

JAN
10



CECE WINANS

DEC
20

KATIE GOT
BANDZ

DEC
21

AFRO FUSION
CHRISTMAS PARTY

DEC
22

JOSILYN'S 4TH
ANNUAL BARBIE
BRUNCH

DEC
22

CUFFING SZN
2: CANDYLAND

DEC
23

SOUTH SHORE
INTERNATIONAL
COLLEGE PREP HIGH
SCHOOL FASHION SHOW

DEC
23

UGLASS SWEATER
DAY PARTY

DEC
24

HOUSE-MAS
CELEBRATION

DEC
28

SILENT PARTY
CHICAGO "HOUSE
VS HIP-HOP"

DEC
29

AFRO FUSION LAST
PARTY IN HYDE PARK
2018

DEC
20

BABY SOUL JAM

JAN
05

JACK N' CHILL
HOSTED BY THE
DISTRICT CHI

JAN
05

AFRO FUSION FIRST
PARTY IN HYDE PARK
2019

BODY, EVERY SUNDAY / SALSA, EVERY THIRD WEDNESDAY

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MUSIC

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Inspector Owl
COURTESY THE ARTIST

continued from 31

self-titled collection they self-released in 2012, summons the quixotic magic of the recently bygone era that birthed the group, when the best indie rock sounded alternately scruffy and ambitious (and even middle-of-the-road material had a novel charm). But *Inspector Owl* is more than just a sentimental visit to the sounds of times past; it contains glimmers of greatness, such as the tender arrangement on "Building Forts That Last Longer Than Castles." —LEOR GALIL

me kill his mom." On "Window," though, Noname gets personal, baring her soul about an empty relationship: "I knew you never love me / But I fucked you anyway / I guess a bitch like to gamble / I guess a bitch like to lonely." Noname's lyrical nimbleness, the thematic substantiveness of her songs, and the dexterity of her exceptional backing band combine to make her one of most unique voices to emerge in hip-hop in a while. —SCOTT MORROW

SUNDAY30

NONAME See Saturday. 9 PM, Thalia Hall, 1807 S. Allport, sold out. 17+

SCREAMING FEMALES See also Monday. *Rad Payoff* and *Djunah* open. 8 PM, Beat Kitchen, 2100 W. Belmont, \$17. 17+

SATURDAY29

NONAME See also Sunday and Monday. 9 PM, Thalia Hall, 1807 S. Allport, sold out. 17+

Capping off a year in which she self-released her critically acclaimed sophomore LP, *Room 25*, Chicago rapper and poet Noname is set to close out 2018 with three consecutive hometown performances. Born Fatimah Nyeema Warner, the Bronzeville native went by Noname Gypsy before settling on her current nom de plume, under which she dropped her 2016 mixtape of hip-hop-infused neo-soul, *Telefone*. *Room 25* maintains the same upbeat, melodic vibes as that debut, and it showcases Noname's evolution as an artist, with poignant commentary on racial and sociopolitical subjects, vividly sexual lyrics, and beautiful live instrumentation and string arrangements. After the soulful, wordless intro to "Self," the album turns to address living while black in America on "Blaxploitation" and "Prayer Song." The former speaks to stereotypes of blackness and the hypocrisy of those preying on those stereotypes (with a jab at Hillary Clinton for "masquerading the system"), while the latter indicts the police violence plaguing the black community using the imagined voice of an officer: "Put your hands behind your back, ante up all your crack, bitch / I seen a cell phone on the dash, could've sworn it's a gun / I ain't see a toddler in the back after firing seven shots / A demon 'bout to get me, he watching

This high-and-tight New Jersey trio, often credited with single-handedly defending the honor of heavy indie rock 'n' roll since they emerged in 2005, hone their attack through near-constant gigging. In fact, Screaming Females play in town so often you'd be forgiven for thinking they're local. (The 2014 album *Live at the Hideout*, recorded with Steve Albini and Timothy Powell in a porta-studio in the alley behind the club, cements their status as honorary Chicagoans in my book.) The band's seventh full-length, February's *All at Once*, does exactly what the title suggests, offering up a filler-free journey through every trick they've developed over the years. Their more introspective tunes are perfectly placed between their wall slammers, while front woman Marissa Paternoster provides ever-surprising eruptions of delight through her guitar heroics. Screaming Females bring their raw energy to the intimate Beat Kitchen for a two-night stand that ought to kick 2018's rotting ass out the back door. Forget the pricey New Year's Eve party packages at other clubs; this year needs an exorcism, and I trust Screaming Females to do it right. —MONICA KENDRICK



Noname
CHANTAL ANDERSON

MONDAY31

BULLY *Accessory and Wulfpac* open. 8:30 PM, *Empty Bottle*, 1035 N. Western, sold out. 21+

On Bully's second full-length record, *Losing* (Sub Pop), vocalist and guitarist Alicia Bognanno doesn't fuck around much. As suggested by its blunt cover art—a stark black-and-white photo of Bognanno sitting cross-legged with her hair shrouding her face—*Losing* is sincere but exacting, a record balanced between emotive indie-rock moments and rip cords of grungy distortion that make way for sustain-pedal superribs. In the latter instances, Bully are at

their most rock effective, and Bognanno adds further proof with her scratchy yowl. On “Kills to Be Resistant,” “Blame,” and “Focused,” she's unapologetic about every one of her judgments about those who wronged her, often using the band's swelling crescendos to let us know what she really thinks—just so there's no confusion whatsoever. Each track represents a power-and-glory musical moment in a cruel, cruel world where guitar rock rarely gets its due anymore, and that's worth some appreciation. The most important things you need to know for tonight's purposes are that Bully is very good live, and this is a New Year's Eve show, and, well, go get loose. —KEVIN WARWICK



Screaming Females
COURTESY GIRLIE ACTION

MUSIC



bottom lounge

ON SALE NOW



DEATH
LIES APOSTLE THE RECKONING
CO-HEADLINING NORTH AMERICA TOUR 2019



HYPOCRISY
FLESHGOD APOCALYPSE
WITH SPECIAL GUEST
AENIMUS

04.05
7:00 PM / all ages

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04.07
7:00 PM / 17+

UPCOMING SHOWS

12.27 EVERY AVENUE
OCEAN GLASS / CITY MOUTH

12.29 EMO NIGHT BROOKLYN
KICKSTAND PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

12.31 GUIDED BY VOICES

01.04 HOME BURIAL
PEACH BUNNY / DEAD HUMMINGBIRD
MT. POCONO
REACT PRESENTS

01.05 PORN AND CHICKEN:
HESH AND BOMMER
SILVER WRAPPER PRESENTS

01.25 BILLY STRINGS

01.26 GNASH
MALLRAT / GUARDIN

01.31 STORY OF THE YEAR
WORLD WAR ME

02.02 DOROTHY
SPIRIT ANIMAL

02.07 BRASSTRACKS
KEMBA / PELL
REVOLVER PRESENTS

02.09 CORROSION OF CONFORMITY
CROWBAR / WEEDEATER / MOTHERSHIP
MILKY WAY TOUR

02.10 BAS
REXX LIFE RAJ / INNET JAMES / CORREY
SILVER WRAPPER PRESENTS

02.15 BLEEP BLOOP
REACT PRESENTS

02.16 DAVID AUGUST
SIRIUSXM PRESETS OCTANE'S ACCELERATOR TOUR

02.21 LIKE A STORM
ROYAL TUSK / AFTERLIFE
KICKSTAND PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

02.23 CHERRY GLAZER
PALEHOUND

02.28 J BOOG
EARTHKRY / EDDY DYN

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THUTMOSE / KEY!

03.02 YOU ME AT SIX
DREAMERS / MACHINEHEART

03.07 LORDS OF ACID
ORGY / GENITORTURERS /
LITTLE MISS NASTY
GABRIEL AND THE APOCAYPSE
KICKSTAND PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

03.08 DAUGHTERS
BLANCK MASS

03.14 ARKELLS
THE GREETING COMMITTEE

04.07 PLINI
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SATURDAY, JANUARY 12 8PM

William Fitzsimmons

SUNDAY, JANUARY 13 7PM

Kathy Mattea

SATURDAY, JANUARY 19 8PM

Doug Martsch
(of Built to Spill)

SUNDAY, JANUARY 20 10:30AM

Justin Roberts &
The Not Ready for
Naptime Players

Family
concert

THURSDAY, JANUARY 24 8PM

Sammy Miller and
The Congregation

THURSDAY, JANUARY 31 7PM

Kasey Chambers
Campfire Tour USA 2019 • with guest Carly Burruss

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1 7:30PM

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NPR'S Embedded

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1 8PM

Dead Horses with special guest
The Brother Brothers • In Szold Hall

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 9 8PM

Masters of Hawaiian Music:
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Nathan Aweau &
Kawika

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 16 5PM

John McCutcheon In Szold Hall

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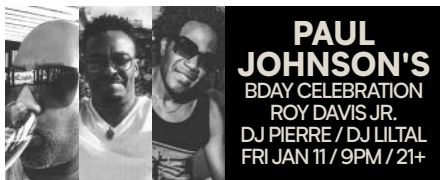
1/9 47SOUL

1/16 André Mehmar Trio

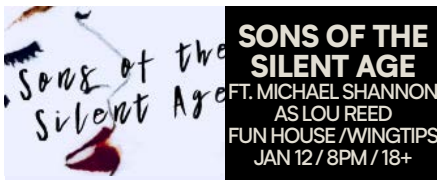
1/23 Los Pireris

1/30 Beppe Gambetta

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DIM
SUN JAN 20 / 8PM / 21+



STEPHEN MALKMUS & THE JICKS
DEHD
WED JAN 23 / 8PM / 18+

SATURDAY JAN 19 / 7PM / ALL AGES

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TOKE / YEAR OF THE COBRA

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STEPHEN MALKMUS & THE JICKS
DEHD

FRIDAY JAN 25 / 9PM / 18+

THE LEMON TWIGS
JACKIE COHEN / JUNGLE GREEN

SATURDAY JAN 26 / 9PM / 18+

THE MAGPIE SALUTE
FT. RICH ROBINSON OF THE BLACK CROWES

WED JAN 30 / 7PM / 21+

RAW Chicago presents
REFLECT

FRIDAY FEB 15 / 7PM / ALL AGES

MAGIC GIANT
CASTLECOMER

THURSDAY FEB 21 / 7:30PM / ALL AGES

Metro & React present
YUNG GRAVY

FRI FEB 22 / SAT FEB 23 / 8PM / 18+

93XRT welcomes
BOB MOULD BAND
ON FRI: AIRSTREAM FUTURES

TUESDAY FEB 26 / 5:30PM / ALL AGES

Metro & Riot Fest present
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WITH CONFIDENCE / SUPER WHATEVR

03/01 AURORA

03/06 TEENAGE FANCLUB

03/12 WET / KILO KISH

03/13 JUNGLE

03/14 VHS COLLECTION

03/16 THE TOSSERS

03/20 JUKEBOX THE GHOST

& THE MOWGLIS

03/20 BLACK MOTH SUPER RAINBOW

@ SLEEPING VILLAGE

MUSIC

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continued from 33

NICK LOWE WITH LOS STRAITJACKETS

The Joel Paterson Trio opens. 10 PM, SPACE, 1245 Chicago, Evanston, \$75.

Though at first glance the matching suits and Mexican wrestling masks favored by Los Straitjackets might point to the contrary, the Nashville instrumental rock group are anything but a one-note gimmick. If their novelties got your attention, more power to them, but with or without the visuals, Los Straitjackets do a fantastic job extending the legacy of late-50s instrumental groups such as the Ventures and the Fireballs. Led by guitarist Eddie Angel, last year they released *What's So Funny About Peace, Love and . . . Los Straitjackets*, a smart tribute to veteran musician, songwriter, and producer Nick Lowe—the band backed him on the April EP *Tokyo Bay/Crying Inside*, and they've been touring with him throughout 2018. Not only does the album prove the group to be a fitting counterpart for Lowe, it shows the durability of Lowe's melodies when reinterpreted as instrumentals. If there's ever room enough to change the arrangement of a song, Los Straitjackets will certainly find it: on "Heart of the City" they give a bluesy makeover to one of Lowe's more punk-flavored originals, while their take on "Cruel to Be Kind" transforms the original happy-go-lucky power-pop number into a Duane Eddy-style love ballad. And as anybody who witnessed the Lowe/Straitjackets show at FitzGerald's last summer will recall, in a live setting Angel and company give the songwriter the kick his great material requires. Tonight they're ringing in the New Year, so it might be just a little too late for them to perform anything from Lowe's 2013 Christmas album, *Quality Street*—but it's not too late for a quality show. —JAMES PORTER

NONAME See Saturday. 9 PM, Thalia Hall, 1807 S. Allport, \$30-\$60. 21+

SCREAMING FEMALES See Sunday. Rad Payoff and Djunah open. 8:30 PM, Beat Kitchen, 2100 W. Belmont, \$17. 17+

SATURDAY

FERAL LIGHT Nequent, Plague of Carcosa, and Scumlord open. 8 PM, Reggie's Music Joint, 2105 S. State, \$10. 21+

Feral Light began life as an aggressive crusty blackened hardcore act with harrowing stories to tell of war and cruelty—on their 2015 self-titled demo, the Minneapolis-based band threw down a bloodstained gauntlet. But starting with the 2016 EP *A Sound of Moving Shadows*, they started to expand and stretch out aurally and thematically. By last year's *Void/Sanctify*, the group had developed a more mystical, philosophical, and abstract bent. Various members have passed through Feral Light's ranks over the years, but the core



Alicia Bognanno of Bully Alysse Gafkjen

of the band remains drummer Andrew Reesen and guitarist, bassist, and vocalist Andy Schoengrund (who previously played with Wolvhammer, Empires, and Halcyon, among others). They're touring as a two-piece, and at tonight's show fans can buy a CD version of the forthcoming *Fear Rides a Shadow*, whose vinyl edition drops in February —MONICA KENDRICK



Nick Lowe COURTESY THE ARTIST

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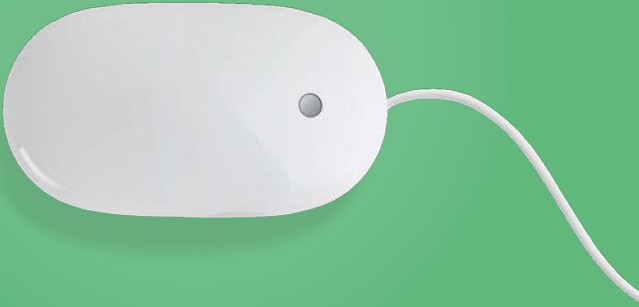
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Notice is hereby given, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County. Registration Number: D18156043 on December 3, 2018. Under the Assumed Business Name of

MK CONSULTING with the business located at: 740 W. FULTON ST. UNIT 1006, CHICAGO, IL 60661. The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: MEGAN KOVACH 740 W. FULTON ST. UNIT 1006, CHICAGO, IL 60661, USA (12/27)

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County. Registration Number: Y18000033 on December 6, 2018 Under the Assumed Business Name of EMMA'S DINER with the business located at: 5200 N SHERIDAN RD APT 301, CHICAGO, IL 60640. The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: JOSHUA W GOLDSTEIN 5200 N SHERIDAN RD APT 301 CHICAGO, IL 60640, USA (12/27)

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Two breakups, one brake on

Old-fashioned relationship advice for the newfangled relationship

Q: I'm a thirtysomething straight woman married for 16 years. Eighteen months ago, I met a man and there was an immediate attraction. For the first 15 months of our relationship, I was his primary sexual and intimate partner, as both sex and intimacy were lacking in his marriage. (My husband knew of the relationship from the start and is accepting for the most part.) After my lover's wife found out about me, she suddenly became very responsive to my lover's sexual and emotional needs. My lover has told his wife that he will not let me go. He has also told me that he is not willing to let his wife go. She isn't happy about being in a triad relationship, but she allows him to continue seeing me with limitations. I am no longer his primary sex partner, and I have been relegated to the back seat. He claims to love us both, yet his wife and I both struggle knowing the other exists. Recently while out shopping, my lover asked me to help him pick out a Christmas gift for his wife. I got upset because I am in love with him, and I have made him my priority (over my husband), but I am not his priority. I love this man and we feel we are soul mates. My lover has said that if we fall apart, he will have to find a new secondary partner because his wife can never give him the soulful fulfillment he needs. Should I continue in this relationship? —**SOUL MATE AVOIDS CHOICE KNOWINGLY**

A: You complain about being relegated to the back seat, SMACK, but it's your husband whose existence only comes up in parenthetical asides. You also describe this relationship as a triad when there are four people involved (you, your lover, your lover's wife, and your husband), which technically makes this a quad. And from the sound of things, only one member of this messy quad seems happy—your lover, the guy who refuses to make you a “priority” over his wife. And while you've convinced yourself that your lover feels as strongly for you as you do for him—“we feel we are soul mates”—it *kindasorta* sounds to me like you may be projecting, SMACK. Because in addition to asking you to pick out Christmas gifts for his wife, your lover and alleged soul mate regards you as expendable and replaceable. And he's told you as much: He intends to “find a new secondary partner” if you two part because his wife doesn't “give him the soulful fulfillment he needs.” That's not how people talk about their soul mates, and it's certainly not something a guy says to someone he regards as his soul mate. Soul mates are typically told they're special and irreplaceable, but your guy sees you as one of many potential seconds out there, and therefore utterly replaceable. Here's what you ought to do: You aren't interested in being your lover's secondary

partner (nor are you much interested in being your husband's wife), so you'll have to call your lover's bluff. And the only card you have to play—and it's a weak hand (all hands with just one card are)—is to dump your lover unless he leaves his wife for you. Success rests on the outside chance your lover was bluffing when he said he'd replace you, but I suppose it's possible he regards you as the irreplaceable one and only said those hurtful things to make you think he wouldn't choose you when you are the one he would've chosen all along. If it turns out that this was the case, SMACK, you'll wind up with your soul mate . . . who happens to be *kindasorta* cruel and manipulative. Calling your lover's bluff—ending a relationship that, in its current form, brings you no joy—is your only hope of having this guy to yourself. But the likelier outcome is that you'll be left alone (with, um, your husband).

Q: My boyfriend and I met at a bondage party a year ago. He's not into bondage (he tagged along with a kinky friend). We hit it off in the chill-out room and started seeing each other. He told me it was okay for me to keep going to bondage parties and seeing some guys I play with one-on-one. Then right after we moved in together, he said he doesn't want me playing with anyone else because we are in love. Which means I can't get tied up at all anymore because he

has zero interest in bondage. He can't see why I'm upset, and I'm not sure what to do. —**BOY IN NEW DRAMA**

A: So now that you're in love, and now that you've signed a lease, and now that you're trapped, BIND, now—NOW—your vanilla boyfriend yanks back the accommodation that convinced you to date him in the first place? There's only one thing you can do: DTMFA.

Q: I am 30 and male, and I have been with my girlfriend for five years. For a slew of reasons (we have almost no interests/hobbies in common, our personalities are completely different, we aren't sexually compatible), I have decided to end it. She's a good, smart, well-educated person for whom I wish only the best. I'm thinking of breaking up with her sometime this week or halfway through next year. I know you believe someone should tell a partner about these sorts of feelings ASAP to avoid robbing them of time they could have spent fixing the situation or moving on. Something inside me tells me that my case is different. My girlfriend is a graduate student in a non-tech/

STEM field (read: hard to find jobs) and has a decent amount of school debt. We also have a dog. We live in a city where the rents are high and it's harder to find a place that will allow dogs. (She will definitely be taking the dog.) The thing is, she would almost certainly want to move out immediately if we broke up. I'm worried that if she tried to absorb the financial hit of a breakup, it might torpedo her education and life plans. I am at a loss for what to do. She's leaving in a week to visit her family for a month—should I dump her before then so she can lean on them? Should I wait until she graduates but dodge questions about where I'm willing to move if she gets a job offer somewhere else? —**DECIDING ULTIMATELY MEANS PAIN**

A: As a general rule, one should never drag out an inevitable breakup. We should break up with people promptly to spare our exes the humiliation of thinking back over the last few months or (God forbid!) the last few years and recalling every painfully ambiguous or deceitfully upbeat conversation about Our Shared Future. Another

good reason to break up with someone promptly: A person (not the person) your ex could spend the rest of their life with might cross their path two months from now—and if they're still with you then or still reeling from a very recent breakup, they won't say yes (old-fashioned) or swipe right (newfangled). But there are exceptions to every rule, DUMP, and I think your case qualifies. As with many exceptions to many rules, your exception honors the spirit of the rule itself. Both reasons I cite for breaking up with someone promptly—to spare your soon-to-be ex's feelings, to get out of the way of your soon-to-be ex's future—are about being considerate of your soon-to-be ex. And that's just what you're doing: You want to end this relationship now, but you're going to wait six months because you don't want to derail your soon-to-be ex-girlfriend's education or career prospects. So out of consideration for her, DUMP, you should coast for a bit longer. **A**

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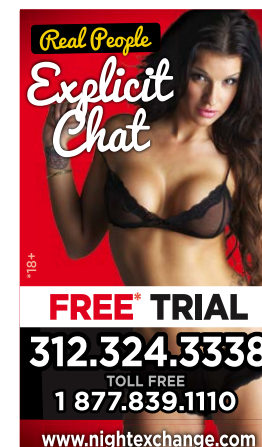
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EARLY WARNINGS

CHICAGO SHOWS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT IN THE WEEKS TO COME



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NEW

American Football 3/30, 9 PM, Metro, 18+
Erykah Badu 1/19, 8 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 17+
Black Moth Super Rainbow 3/20, 8 PM, Sleeping Village
Cold Cave, Adult. 2/27, 8 PM, Metro, 18+
Mike Doughty, Wheatus 3/7, 8 PM, Sleeping Village
Empress Of 3/1, 9 PM, Sleeping Village
Face to Face 2/23, 9 PM, Subterranean, 17+
Face to Face acoustic 2/21, 8 PM, Subterranean, 17+
Homesake 3/29, 8 PM, Metro 18+
J Boog, Earthkry 2/28, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Freddy Jones Band 3/24, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Fri 12/28, noon 18+
La Luz 3/22, 9 PM, Sleeping Village
Meek Mill 3/8, 7:30 PM, Aragon Ballroom 18+
Meow Meow & Thomas Lauderdale 3/29, 7 and 9:30 PM, SPACE, Evanston 18+
Van Morrison 4/24, 7 PM, Chicago Theatre
Music Frozen Dancing with Ty Segall & White Fence, Negative Scanner, Plack Blague, and Glyders 2/23, 1 PM, Empty Bottle **FREE** 18+
Olivia O'Brien 4/4, 7:30 PM, Lincoln Hall 18+
Idan Raichel 3/23, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Fri 12/28, noon 18+
Teen 3/27, 9:30 PM, Hideout
The-Dream 2/28, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Ben Wendel Seasons Band 2/9, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+
Yob, Voivod 3/27, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

UPDATED

Tonight Alive 2/12, 6:30 PM, Bottom Lounge, canceled

UPCOMING

Aces 3/9, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall 18+
Acid Mothers Temple, Yamantaka // Sonic Titan 4/13, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Action Bronson, Meyhem Lauren 2/23, 6 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+
Anderson .Paak 2/16, 8 PM, Riviera Theatre 18+
As It Is 2/15, 6 PM, Subterranean 18+
Backstreet Boys 8/10, 8 PM, United Center
Bad Boy Bill 1/19, 10 PM, the Mid
Baroness, Deafheaven 3/31, 6:30 PM, Riviera Theatre 18+
Adrian Belew 4/4, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music 18+
Billy Strings 1/25, 9 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Body/Head 3/7, 7:30 PM, Art Institute of Chicago
Billy Bragg 4/25-27, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Cannibal Corpse, Morbid Angel, Necrot 3/4, 6 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+
Carbon Leaf 4/19, 8 PM, City Winery 18+
Mariah Carey 3/11, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre
Tyler Carter 1/8, 7:30 PM, Beat Kitchen, 17+
Neko Case, Shannon Shaw 4/26-27, 7:30 PM, The Vic, 18+
Cher, Nile Rodger & Chic 2/8, 8 PM, United Center
Cherry Glazerr 2/23, 9 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Coathangers 4/9, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

Corrosion of Conformity, Crowbar, Weedeater 2/9, 7:30 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Daughters, Blanck Mass 3/8, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Dead & Company 6/14-15, 7 PM, Wrigley Field
Deerhunter 2/17, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Dream Theater 3/29, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre
Thomas Dybdahl 1/31, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston 18+
Fleetwood Mac 3/1, 8 PM, United Center
Flesh Eaters 3/10, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall
Marty Friedman 2/13, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
Gnash 1/26, 7:30 PM, Bottom Lounge 18+
Ariana Grande 4/7-8, 7:30 PM, United Center
Health 4/20, 8:30 PM, Bottom Lounge 18+
High on Fire 1/22, 8 PM, Metro, 18+
Hives, Refused 5/20, 7 PM, the Vic, 18+
Julia Holter 2/28, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Il Divo 3/27, 8 PM, Rosemont Theater, Rosemont
I'm With Her, Mipso 3/2, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Interpol 2/7, 7:30 PM, Chicago Theatre
Iron Maiden 8/22, 7:30 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park
Wanda Jackson 3/14, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston 18+
Joe Jackson 2/21-22, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Mick Jenkins 2/2, 9 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Jerusalem in My Heart 3/26, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Elton John 2/15, 8 PM, Allstate Arena, Rosemont
Marcus Johnson 2/6, 8 PM, City Winery 18+

Judas Priest 5/25, 8 PM, Rosemont Theater, Rosemont
Stephen Kellogg 3/22, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Kid Capri 1/4, 10 PM, the Promontory
King Crimson 9/10, 8 PM, Auditorium Theatre
King Tuff, Stonefield 1/26, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Kiss 3/2, 7:30 PM, United Center
Mark Knopfler 9/1, 7:30 PM, Chicago Theatre
Le Butcherettes 2/20, 8 PM, Cobra Lounge, 17+
Lemon Twigs 1/25, 9 PM, Metro, 18+
Phil Lesh & the Terrapin Family Band 3/7-8, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Jeff Lynne's ELO 6/27, 8 PM, United Center
Stephen Malkmus & the Jicks 1/23, 8 PM, Metro, 18+
Mandolin Orange 2/16, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Mineral, Tancred 1/24, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall
Misfits, Fear, Venom Inc. 4/27, 7:30 PM, Allstate Arena, Rosemont
Monolord 4/26, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Bob Mould Band 2/22-23, 8 PM, Metro, 18+
Muse, Walk the Moon 4/12, 8 PM, United Center
Tom Odell 4/30, 7:30 PM, Thalia Hall 18+
Anders Osborne 2/9, 7 and 10 PM, City Winery 18+
Parcels 3/1, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Perfume 4/5, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre
Perturbator 5/9, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Pom-Poms 1/12, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Procol Harum 2/20-21, 8 PM, City Winery 18+
Quinn XCII 3/20, 6 PM, Riviera Theatre 18+
Rivers of Nihil, Enthos 3/5, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
Rolling Stones 6/21, 7:30 PM; 6/25, 7:30 PM, Soldier Field
Jesse Rutherford 5/3, 8 PM, Subterranean
Travis Scott 2/21, 8 PM, United Center
Sheer Terror 1/12, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 18+
Snail Mail 1/17, 9 PM, Metro, 18+
Musiq Soulchild 1/3-4, 7:30 and 10 PM, City Winery 18+
JD Souther & Karla Bonoff 3/3, 5 and 8 PM, City Winery 18+
Spiritualized 4/9, 8 PM, the Vic, 18+
Vince Staples, JPEGmafia 3/12, 8:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, Fri 12/14, 10 AM, 18+
The Suffers 2/16, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Kasim Sulton's Utopia 3/7, 8 PM, City Winery 18+
Supersuckers 3/12, 8 PM, Beat Kitchen

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Teenage Fanclub 3/6, 7:30 PM, Metro, 18+
This Must Be the Band 2/15-16, 8 PM, The Vic, 18+
Paul Thorn Band 5/2, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston 18+
Yann Tiersen 5/18, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Toh Kay 2/1, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Token 2/18, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 18+
Tokyo Police Club 4/26, 9 PM, Empty Bottle
Tourist 2/21, 8 PM, Sleeping Village
Train, Goo Goo Dolls 7/20, 7 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park
Two Friends 1/25, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+
Sharon Van Etten 2/14-15, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Verve Pipe 3/29, 8 PM, City Winery 18+
Wisn y Yandel 6/7, 8 PM, Allstate Arena, Rosemont
Chely Wright 1/27, 7 PM, SPACE, Evanston 18+
Rachael Yamagata 1/29-30, 8 PM, City Winery 18+
Yawning Man, Freedom Hawk 1/23, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Yoshi Flower 2/5, 8 PM, Schubas, 18+
You Me at Six 3/2, 7 PM, Bottom Lounge 18+
Yung Gravy 2/21, 7:30 PM, Metro 18+
Yuri & Pandora 3/16, 8 PM, Rosemont Theater, Rosemont
Zeke Beats 1/12, 8 PM, Subterranean, 18+
Zomboy 2/8, 9 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 18+

SOLD OUT

Alkaline Trio 1/3-6, 9 PM, Metro, 18+
Jess Glynne 3/30, 7:30 PM, the Vic 18+
Conan Gray 4/8, 7:30 PM, Bottom Lounge 18+
Beth Hart 4/25, 7:30 PM, Park West, 18+
LP 2/8, 7:30 PM, the Vic, 18+
Ella Mai 3/3, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+
Massive Attack 3/23, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre
Mumford & Sons 3/29, 7:30 PM, United Center
Robyn 3/6, 8 PM, Aragon Ballroom 18+
Lennon Stella 3/28, 7 PM, Metro 18+
Mike Stud 2/1, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge 18+ **FI**



GOSSIP WOLF

A furry ear to the ground of the local music scene

GUITARIST AND SOUL SINGER Isaiah Sharkey has Chicago's DNA in his veins—he lived in Cabrini-Green as a kid and sat in at the Velvet Lounge as a teenager. As an adult, he's become an in-demand hired hand, playing on D'Angelo's Grammy-winning 2014 masterpiece *Black Messiah* and bringing his blistering runs to John Mayer's touring band. In 2017, he released his debut solo full-length, *Love Life Live*, an underappreciated album heavy on elegant Aquarian soul that features cameos by the likes of **DJ Jazzy Jeff** and **Lalah Hathaway**. Sharkey says he's at work on *Love Is the Key*, a new record "that reflects funk, jazz, classic R&B, hip-hop, and other genres that've influenced me throughout my journey." He plans a spring release, and he'll play **Chop Shop** on Thursday, December 27, with Slique Jay Adams and Aniba Hotep & the Sol Collective.

Humboldt Park Orchestra founder **Angel Rodriguez** says he launched the combo in December 2013 "to feature top local salsa musicians, most of them band-leaders in their own right." Since then he and the HPO have backed many famous artists and covered the whole history of salsa, merengue, and bachata. On Wednesday, January 2, they celebrate their fifth anniversary at **Alhambra Palace** (1240 W. Randolph) with a tribute to women in salsa, featuring singers **Marisol Miranda**, **Wanda Inette**, and **Doris Osorio** and instrumentalists **Carol MacPherson** (trombone), **Mai Sugimoto** (sax), and **Andrea Lancotot** (trumpet). Here's to many more years of filling dance floors!

In August, Chicago nonprofit **Rape Victim Advocates** changed its name to **Resilience**, but its work supporting survivors and preventing sexual violence continues. On Saturday, December 29, three of Gossip Wolf's favorite locals play a benefit for Resilience at the **Burlington: Meat Wave, Skip Church**, and **Sunglow**, the bouncy electro-pop project of Daniel Lynch, who moved here last year from Savannah, Georgia. —**J.R. NELSON**

Got a tip? Tweet @Gossip_Wolf or e-mail gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com.

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12/20

MAREN CELEST
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WED
12/26

6PM-FREE **WONDER & SKEPTICISM**
"SCIENCE COMMUNICATION: WHOSE JOB IS IT ANYWAY?"
PLAGUE OF CARCOSA

FRI
12/21

5PM-FREE **HARD COUNTRY HONKY TONK WITH
THE HOYLE BROTHERS**
CONTAINER
PLATTENBAU • MUKOS

THU
12/27

LANDO CHILL
VIC SPENCER • AJANI JONES

SAT
12/22

12PM-FREE **DJ BILLIAMS PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS**
HOLIDAY BENEFIT FOR GREATER CHICAGO FOOD DEPOSITORY
FEAT. **THE TROLLS**
ACCEPTOR • OLD IRVING

FRI
12/28

RYLEY WALKER
OHMME (DUO) • BEN LAMAR GAY

SAT
12/29

12PM-FREE **THE 14TH ANNUAL
ALEX CHILTON BIRTHDAY BASH**
SAINT PÉ
TROY ANDERSON

SUN
12/23

FREE **A MAYPOLE XMAS MIRACLE FEAT.**
WANDERING BOYS (DUO)
GLASS MOUNTAIN • EMORY GAP

SUN
12/30

FREE **THE COWBOYS**

12/31: NYE WITH BULLY, 12/31 @ LOGAN SQUARE AUDITORIUM: **WINDY CITY SOUL CLUB NYE 2018**, 1/1: **EVERYONE'S HUNGOVER 2018** (11AM-FREE), 1/1: **MIKE'S HARD KARAOKE** (5PM-FREE), 1/2: **THE TOMBLANDS**, 1/3: **LOS BLACK DOGS**, 1/5: **T-REXTASY**, 1/6: **GOODGRANDKIDZ**, 1/7: **THE CURLS** (FREE), 1/8: **WET PISS**, 1/9: **FAINTLIFE**, 1/10: **SLUSHY**, 1/12: **THE POM-POMS**, 1/14: **TEDDY & THE ROUGH RIDERS** (FREE), 1/15: **FREE SNACKS**, 1/17: **DECA**, 1/21: **PEEL** (FREE), 1/22: **ANIKA**, 1/23: **YAWNING MAN**, 1/25: **SHAMIR**, 1/28: **ENGINE SUMMER** (FREE), 1/31: **OVEF OW**, 2/1: **P.O.S.**, 2/2: **MELKBELLY**, 2/8: **GLITTER CREEPS PRESENTS BOY HARSHER**
NEW ON SALE: 2/9: **NAKED GIANTS**, 2/15: **MILLO**, 2/23 @ OUTSIDE EMPTY BOTTLE: **MUSIC FROZEN DANCING: A WINTER BLOCK PARTY** (1PM-FREE), 3/3: **PSYCHEDELIC PORN CRUMPETS**, 3/9 **TRISOMIE 21**, 3/23: **JERRY PAPER**, 3/29: **THE KVB**, 4/29: **MONOLORD**

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MARY GAUTHIER, ELIZA GILKYSON & GRETCHEN PETERS
- 1.12** **MAYSA**
- 1.14-15** **STEVE EARLE**
- 1.17** **PARIS COMBO**
- 1.19** **MELANIE FIONA**
- 1.24-25** **RANDY BACHMAN (OF THE GUESS WHO)**
- 1.18** **SKYLAR GREY**
- 1.29-30** **RACHAEL YAMAGATA**

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SHANE KOYCZAN

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CORKY SIEGEL'S CHAMBER BLUES
FEAT. TRACY NELSON

UPCOMING SHOWS

- 1.7** **DAN TEDESCO**
- 1.9** **CHRISTIAN FRENSE & FRIENDS PRESENT TANGO NIGHT**
- 1.10** **SLICE - FILM SCREENING**
- 1.16** **EAGLEMANIA**
- 1.20** **JODEE LEWIS & JONAS FRIDDLE**
- 1.21** **LET FREEDOM RING, CHICAGO! A MUSICAL CELEBRATION OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.**
- 1.23** **THE HOT SARDINES**
- 1.27** **SUSAN WERNER**
- 1.28** **TREY MCLAUGHLIN & THE SOUNDS OF ZAMAR**
- 1.31-2.2** **LEJANDRO ESCOVEDO WITH DON ANTONIO BAND**
- 2.3** **HAPPY BIRTHDAY LANGSTON HUGHES: A CELEBRATION IN POETRY, PROSE & SONG**
- 2.4-5** **MS. LISA FISCHER & GRAND BATON**
- 2.6** **MARCUS JOHNSON WITH KATHY KOSINS**
- 2.8** **MARC ROBERGE (OF O.A.R.)**
- 2.9** **ANDERS OSBORNE**
- 2.10** **ANITA WILSON**
- 2.11** **RUEN BROTHERS**
- 2.12** **HUDSON TAYLOR WITH CRAIG STRICKLAND**



HERE'S THE QUESTION:

Can a *community-centered independent paper* survive in this environment?

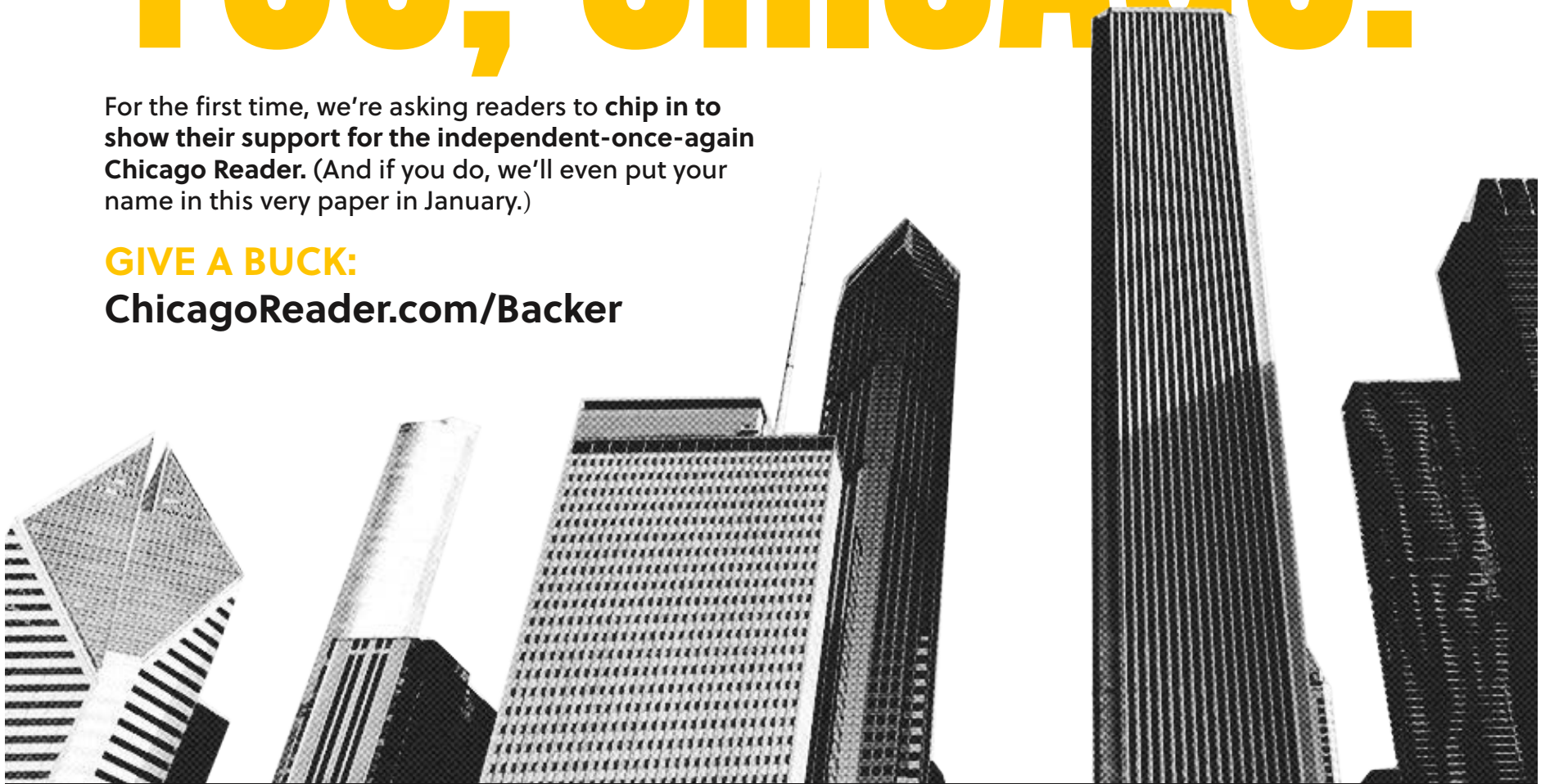
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